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LITERACY REMAINS:  
LEARNING AND LOSS IN THE BRAIN DRAIN  
OF FILIPINO MIGRANT LABOR

BY

EILEEN A. LAGMAN

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Catherine Prendergast, Chair  
Associate Professor Mary Arends-Kuenning  
Associate Professor Martin Manalansan  
Assistant Professor Kate Vieira, University of Wisconsin-Madison

## Abstract

In economics, migration policy, and literacy studies, literacy education has been positioned as the primary factor in transnational migration. “Brain drain” in particular is traditionally understood as the phenomenon where skilled migrant workers from developing countries use their literacy skills to gain work in developed countries. Through qualitative research with Filipino migrant workers, educators, government employers, and labor recruiters, *Literacy Remains* argues that in the brain drain of Filipino migrant work, it is not simply “brain power” but instead affect management that supports the structure of transnational labor migration. In an economic flow characterized by skilled-labor vs. unskilled labor, high-skilled vs. low-skilled work, affect management, became the “high-skilled” work through which skills-based labor migration functions. Literacy, traditionally defined by language acquisition and writing tasks, is often valued as high-skill ability in human capital formations, but for the Filipino migrants I interviewed, language acquisition and writing tasks were in practice experienced as lower-order thinking—tasks that included rote memorization or mechanical application. In contrast, when migrant workers engaged in affect management, consisting of embodied, cognitive, and emotional ways of thinking and learning, they engaged in critical thinking, problem-solving, mediation, and analysis—all practices existing under the rubric of higher-order thinking. I argue that affect management is a kind of literacy practice, intricately related to and including an ever on-going project of mediation. *Affective literacies*, I argue, offer the means for migrants to practice critical literacy work when professionalized literacies and intellectually constraining workplaces offer little room for critical engagement.

Based on forty-eight semi-structured interviews, text analysis, and observations in the Central Luzon region of the Philippines and the Midwestern region of the US, this project

examines the ways that Filipino migrants, across different age groups and occupations, engage in affective literacies to survive the daily traumas of migrant life. Once called the “temp agency to the world” (Diamond), the Philippines offers a unique context to study migrant literacy and learning. To examine what exactly is lost in the brain drain of human capital, I first trace the emergence of the individual as a viable and valuable economic subject in human capital formation and, by extension, an individual with tremendous effect on national well-being. If the story of human capital relays a myth of the autonomous individual, then brain drain offers a story of how individuals get constituted in the first place by focusing on the effects of human capital loss. I argue that this work of creating viable economic subjects is affective literacy work, and I specifically detail a Philippine education system that creates a culture of regulation and competition fueled by the affective dynamics of heroes, winners, and “topnotchers.”

I argue that affective literacies move differently than we have previously understood literacy to move. Rather than thinking of literacy as moving from point A to point B, affective literacies move through a continuous series of *affective attachments* to the state, where literacy is used to mediate an ongoing dynamic relationship between state and migrant citizen. Because of this, brain drain functions for migrants as a form of *literacy remains*—a way of indexing “what hurts” (Eng 172) about literacy. Brain drain, I argue, is a valuable signifier for migrants, acting as a marker for the losses experienced in the pursuit of literacy and modernity, as well as a marker for the loss of the responsibility of the state for the welfare of its citizens. But migrants still find ways to use their affective literacies to treat the state as employer, demand efficiency, and question the state’s performance of authenticity and authority. I illustrate these dynamics through case studies of migrant professionals, temporary care workers, Filipino educators, and documentation employees. Together these chapters reveal a vast architecture of production by

economic, political, and social actors who do the work to create mobile workers. However, workers are not just moved abroad—they also move. They engage in affective literacies to make their losses visible and to imagine new possibilities for themselves and the nation.

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## Abbreviations

CFO	Commission on Filipinos Overseas
CHEd	Commission on Higher Education
DH	Domestic Helper
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
EVP	Exchange Visitor Program
HSW	Household Service Worker
ILO	International Labor Organization
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IT	Information Technology
MOI	Memorandum of Instruction
NCII	National Certificate II Course
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OFW	Overseas Filipino Worker
OWWA	Overseas Workers Welfare Association
PAASCU	Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities
PDOS	Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar
POEA	Philippine Overseas Employment Agency
POLO	Philippine Overseas Labor Office
PRC	Professional Regulation Commission
RA 8042	Republic Act 8042
RA 10022	Republic Act 10022
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority

## Introduction

### Temp Agency Nation

The irony of [Overseas Filipino Worker] Family Day in the Philippine malls is not just that shopping has been elevated to a government-sponsored welcome celebration, but that psychotherapy serves as a party favor.

—David Diamond, “One Nation, Overseas”

David Diamond claims in his 2006 trend piece for *Wired* magazine that the Philippines has “discovered the future of work.” He is referring to the fact that at any time, around 10 percent of the country’s population includes “Filipino global commuters” in the “world’s most distributed economy” who work abroad in countries like Italy, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Singapore, and Uzbekistan. The year of Diamond’s article, the Philippines deployed for the first time over one million workers to 197 countries and territories. These workers would generate a total of US\$12.76 billion in remittance dollars sent electronically to family back home, and this money would account for nearly ten percent of the nation’s gross national product, “stabilizing its peso, improving foreign currency reserves, shoring up consumption, and making more than a dent in the unemployment rate.” As Diamond points out, in line with the research of Filipino migration scholars, the Philippine government readily embraces labor migration as a development strategy and even, he says, “revels in the export of its people [...] embracing its role as temp agency to the world and structuring a political ‘business plan’ accordingly.”

The Philippines, as Diamond illustrates, is a place where people and their literacy skills are considered to be exports in a way that is comparable to other resources, goods, or commodities. In fact, scholars of Filipino labor migration suggest that it is precisely because of its lack of manufacturing infrastructure that the Philippines must turn to its human capital—its educated people—as its primary export. Robyn Rodriguez claims in her ethnographic study

*Migrants for Export* that people are the country's second most profitable export with remittances bringing in \$1.494 billion monthly to the nation's economy. This is second only to electronic products that bring in \$1.915 billion in monthly earnings, but more than the third largest export—articles of apparel and clothing accessories—that bring in \$125 million<sup>1</sup>. As Rodriguez writes, “in the Philippines, the export of people can be more profitable than the export of clothing” (*Migrants* xiv). The governor of the Philippines' central bank is quoted by Diamond as saying, “At this time, its too late to be competitive in manufacturing. The biggest boon we have is trained manpower that speaks English.” And Patricia Santo Tomas, then Philippine secretary of labor and employment interviewed by Diamond, says, “its not politically correct to say you're exporting people, but its part of globalization, and I would like to think that countries like ours, rich in human resources, have that to contribute to the rest of the world.” Thus to significant economic actors in the Philippine state, Filipino people as educated manpower, were considered a rich natural resource, and literacy education to create this manpower became folded into the processes of national economic development as a stabilizing force for the developing country.

But throughout Diamond's article, cracks in the narrative of “humans as exports” begin to surface and it becomes clear that people and their literacy abilities are not exported in the same way as sugar cane, wood, apparel or other national resources and commodities. To open his article, he describes a scene at a mall in the Philippines in December—the month the government designated as the month celebrating the Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW)—where banners hang from the rafters welcoming returning workers, and OFWs and their families are treated to free medical care, dental checkups, and a booth for psychological counseling. As the epigraph to this

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<sup>1</sup> According to Rodriguez, these figures are monthly earnings compared to remittances from July 2009.

<sup>2</sup> These give us a limited view of national trends—they do not include permanent migrants processed through the Commission of Filipinos Overseas, or reveal the numbers of workers already abroad—but they give us a sense of trends of workers who are seeking to go abroad for the first time.

<sup>3</sup> See Cruz and Guevarra for more on the Supermaid advertisement as figuring the female worker and racial branding.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the evacuation of Filipino migrant workers during the 2006 Lebanon War, see Balana and Avendaño, Docena, and

chapter illustrates, Diamond sees the contradictions in this festivity meant to celebrate the people that make up the nation's most valuable resource but that also offers free psychotherapy as a "party favor" necessary to be that resource. Diamond's piece suggests, then, that neither literacy learning nor the human capital it becomes is really just like any resource, good, or commodity. It is not a neutral good mobilized mechanically to move across borders, but literacy is learned by people, including their bodies and emotions, and produced by the constellation of political, cultural, and economic forces that create the conditions for a "temp agency nation" in the first place.

Not only does acting as human export have significant psychological and emotional costs, but Diamond finds that this rich human resource does not always receive the gains that it should—human capital is an investment that does not always cash in. Diamond tells the story of fifty-three-year-old Vidasto Lantaca, a college-educated mechanical engineer who had been unemployed for three years before securing work in Dubai as a quality control manager of a construction company. Not only did Lantaca's employers switch his contract to one with a lower salary and subpar housing arrangements—an illegal practice according to Philippine government guidelines—but after only six weeks his two-year contract was rescinded and his employers sent him back to the Philippines with all his recruitment debts still left to pay and no wages to pay them with. More than other forms of capital, human capital is unstable and unpredictable—a risky investment. As Lantaca experienced both by obtaining a job that required less skills than he had and by unsuccessfully retaining that job, humans may go through the appropriate production processes—education, literacy learning, and skills training among them—but human capital's value on the global labor market is unpredictable no matter how much the Philippine government attempts to regulate education or labor training to global standards.

By signaling to the labor recruitment agencies, training centers, higher education institutions, and family and friends who loan money, among the other many economic actors in the Philippine labor migration apparatus, Diamond hints at an underlying vast network that supports the creation of human capital, illustrating what education and literacy scholar Evan Watkins has written about human capital: “While human capital in whatever form appears as if it were an independent resource whose value is set by the market, its development requires an immense architecture of production and support structures existing in the background” (*Literacy Work* 9). Human capital, Watkins goes on to argue, is not a natural resource. It is produced, and education is the primary site of its production. In the temp agency nation, production of human capital is widely dispersed among the state as well as private educational institutions and NGOs. For example, Diamond describes the long existing state-managed mechanism that has facilitated Filipino labor migration since 1974 when Ferdinand Marcos institutionalized labor migration with Presidential Decree 442, creating three state agencies to manage workers on a government-to-government basis: the Overseas Employment Development Board, the Bureau of Employment Services, and the National Seaman’s Board. This mechanism eventually turned into a large private sector industry for recruiters, trainers, and educators to profit from the state’s embrace of labor migration.

However, actors involved in the creation of human capital must also simultaneously do the work to produce its value—often this work, as I will illustrate, is affective in nature. The state’s primary roles, now instituted through the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency (POEA), Overseas Workers Welfare Association (OWWA), and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), among others, include acting as a regulator for these private industry partners, while also creating citizenship

ties with Filipinos in the diaspora in hopes of gaining both remittances and foreign investment from those who work abroad. The government's celebrations of family day, OFW month, and celebrating the OFW as *bagong bayani* (new national hero) are all part of this mechanism and together, these structures point to affective dynamics necessary to manage this "business plan." As William Mazzarella has argued, "Any social project that is not imposed by force alone must be affective in order to be effective" (299). Rather than think of human capital as an act of an individual investor, I will argue that human capital is produced through affective dynamics in which many actors in the political, economic, and social realm take part. By attempting to generate national pride and sacrificial hero-workers who put their emotions second to their country's and families' needs, the Philippine state directs affects toward individual workers and their merit, ultimately obscuring the immense architecture of production and support structures that manage their movement abroad.

In addition to the narrative of humans as exports, Diamond signals to another story animating the temp agency nation: flexible and borderless global commutes and telecommunications technologies that make family and citizenship possible across distances. He writes, "With advances in transportation and telecommunications barreling ahead, its only a matter of time before the Philippine miracle becomes a standard for the new mobile global order, with skilled and unskilled workers commuting over multiple time zones to fill in labor gaps, zapping wages homeward through space, reentering for a new assignment. Welcome to virtual nationhood." This "Philippine miracle" Diamond suggests is made possible through technologies that make the "zapping" of remittances "through space" a reality. In the future of work, he argues, people will not be weighed down with the complications of border crossing or the materiality of money, knowledge or even love or citizenship. This is the promise of global

capital—a borderless, mobile world built on a flexible contingent employment structure. The future of work includes a world that is more flexible and more mobile, an ideal postindustrial society ushered in by the global economy and information age. This is a world that creates more and more experiences, new possible social relations and new literacies, and this is especially the case in the Philippines, Diamond suggests, a country that sends and receives more cell phone text messages than citizens of any other nation. “I MISS YOU; SEND MONEY; DO YOUR HOMEWORK—its how OFWs and their families remain families,” he writes. He describes NGOs in Hong Kong that open centers for migrants to use computers so that they could email, video chat with, or instant message their families back home.

There is no doubt that the migration of Filipino workers across the world is creating new literacies and new opportunities for literacy use—more texts and more writing that travel across space, maintaining and creating what sociologists have called “transnational social fields” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 1007). Literacy scholarship examining transnational movement readily points to the growing amount of literacy learning that migration brings—digital communications, remittances, letters, linguistic resources, among them. While it is true that mobility can encourage education and cross-border relations and may encourage new forms of writing, communication, and symbolic mediation, these possibilities are tied to the experience of loss—cycles of loss and gain define the migrant experience. Take this unsettling example offered in the Diamond article: “Rosaria Reyes, the Filipino domestic helper killed by a suicide bombing in Israel last year, transmitted a message to her son the night before her death: MATULOG KA NA. Go to sleep already.” Diamond presents this story as a testament to the virtues of digital technology—one last message before a devastating tragedy, a message that was made possible through the miracles of technology. But when understood not within a story of global progress

but one of the ongoing and residual effects of the Philippine's colonial history, this story is less about the communication technology that facilitated the message, and more about the loss experienced through the violence of migration and the precarious contexts of contingent global work for Third World workers. Thus, we might ask how do we attend to a "future for work" and a future for new literacies for transnational migrant workers while also attending to the losses created in their wake? As Martin Manalansan has written,

"the idea of 'flexibility' (one of the benign sounding jargon terms of late capitalist discourse) in an era of expanding neoliberal ideologies masks, if not deflects, the high emotional toll and physical costs of unsecured temporary labor [...] The deployment of 'flexibility' hides tensions in both material and affective environments and disregards the various forms of violence, dislocation, and death that permeate the lived experiences of these workers" ("Servicing" 215).

Manalansan argues here that a focus on border-crossing mobility and flexibility obscures the many traumas and losses that bring them into being. Workers from the temp agency nation are the most flexible kind of workers. They are marketed by the government as fluent English speakers, well versed in digital technologies, and educated to meet international standards. Their skills are thought of as deployable and usable in all countries, in any workplace. But Manalansan's argument points to a need to talk about the "future of work" and a future for literacy learning that does not forget the costs and the losses that come along with it.

I open with Diamond's article here because it paints a complicated picture of what literacy looks like in the "temp agency to the world," a world where the humanity of human capital makes the "humans as exports" and "borderless world" narratives difficult to hold up. The contradictions of skills-based transnational labor migration prompt us to ask: How do we



attend to what Deborah Brandt has signaled as the “great expenditures of emotional, psychological, and technical effort” when humans are treated as human capital (“Writing” 176)? How should we imagine the global movement of literacy in a way that takes into account the “emotional toll” that Manalansan reminds us is masked by discourses of global mobility and flexibility? Or to put it more simply, how is literacy made meaningful in the context of skills-based Filipino migration? *Literacy Remains* sets out to address these questions by focusing on the conditions of learning and literacy in a stream of migration economists have labeled “brain drain.” Through qualitative research with Filipino migrant workers, educators, government employers, and labor recruiters, my study suggests that in the brain drain of Filipino migrant work, it is not simply “brain power” but instead affect management that supports the structure of the temp agency nation. Affect management, I argue, is the “high-skilled” work through which skills-based labor migration functions. Literacy, traditionally defined by language acquisition and writing tasks, is often valued as high-skill ability in human capital formations, but in my research with migrant workers I found that language acquisition and writing tasks were in practice experienced as lower-order thinking—tasks that include rote memorization or mechanical application. In contrast, when migrant workers engage in affect management, consisting of embodied, cognitive, and emotional ways of thinking and learning, they engage in critical thinking, problem-solving, mediation, and analysis—all practices characterized as high-order thinking. Affect management, I will argue is a kind of literacy practice, intricately related to the work of symbolic mediation. While many scholars of affect keep a sharp distance between affect and the work of symbolic mediation, I draw on the work of William Mazzarella who argues that sensory experiences and the symbolic mediations they become remain in constant dialectical relationship, making affect and language difficult to separate. In this sense, I define

*affective literacies* as affect management, the ritual and professional coordination of affect, which includes an ever on-going project of mediation.

By using the term affective literacies, I also reference the debate around what Watkins has described as “adjectival literacies” —an increasing phenomenon where the word “literacy” is attached to any kind of knowledge (for example, depression literacy, financial literacy, emotional literacy, are some examples he gives). While literacy scholars such as Gunther Kress and Brian Street lament the detachment of the word “literacy” from any real meaning, I instead follow Watkins’ argument that the phenomenon of adjectival literacies point to the increasing tendency to make different knowledge forms fit into the frameworks of human capital. The expansion of adjectival literacies is not about knowing *about* something (knowing about emotion in emotional literacy, knowing about finance in financial literacy) but about the increasing necessity to develop a “power of representation that can command attention elsewhere and educate others about how and why to pay attention. The proliferation of adjectival literacies is also the proliferation of representation practices and educational imperatives” (*Literacy Work* 146). Thus adjectival literacies, as Watkins explains them, are not really about the practices or the experiences of literacy users, but the work of representing an array of particular practices as an educational imperative—the world of folding this or that literacy into the work of human capital production. Therefore, to identify affective literacies is to present affects as learnable, capitalizable and necessary for the creation of human capital. This move is one that I argue takes place in the structures of the temp agency nation—affective literacies were not just experienced and practiced by migrant workers, but were represented as a kind of literacy by the state. Even though the state did not use the word “literacy” to label their work, they did do the work in bringing affect into the fold of human capital production. Government trainings articulated the

importance of managing emotions, of acting like good worker-ambassadors in the world, and of being good migrant-citizens. Affect management is the labor that supports human capital creation; it is, I argue, essential work in the migration of Filipino labor. Affective literacy work is often invisible in the workplace and in formulations of wage/labor exchange, but experienced by migrant workers as a kind of labor surrounding their labor—the labor of labor.

Through this framework for thinking about affect and literacy, I will argue that we should understand affective literacies moving differently than literacy scholars have previously imagined the movement of transnational literacies. Unlike letters, remittances, Facebook chats, linguistic knowledge or other moving literacies, affective literacies in the temp agency nation move through *affective attachments* between the state and citizen. In the Philippines, literacy accumulates at a rapid pace—language learning, certifications, trainings, real world work, and communicative experience are all a part of the state-managed labor migration mechanism creating and sending human capital. Alongside this accumulation of literacy, a hero culture has been established in government documents and everyday discourse where “beating the odds” is a narrative that shapes the direction of work, increasing competition and preserving “the emotional intensities of hyperindividualism” (Watkins, *Class Degrees* 16). Watkins claims that this ultimately creates an equally skilled “pool of waste labor” necessary to maintain this narrative—labor that is “expected to perform comparatively very skilled labor across quite a wide range of positions, usually in ways that do not differ appreciably from how it might be performed by a more elite pool” (*Class Degrees* 88). These are dynamics that Watkins has pointed out to be at work in US higher education, but I will illustrate that in government documents, migrant accounts, and everyday discourse in the temp agency nation, these take on a distinctly Filipino character. For example, the *bagong bayani* is ubiquitous figure indicating a sacrificial national

hero based on the moral qualities espoused in Catholicism and modeled after historical figures such as José Rizal. In the Philippines, waste labor is an affective experience handled through principles of *matiyaga* (patience, perseverance). Much of the affective literacy work surrounding the human capital of migrant workers and its economic value happens through navigating a widespread and segmented state regulatory structure that takes particular interests in defining good migrant workers as those which maintain not only citizenship ties with the state, but see the state as a caring agent. Taking into account Watkins argument that literacy work includes the “necessary labor of self-constitution as subject,” (*Literacy Work* 22) I argue that migrants’ affect management includes negotiating an understanding of how the state positions them as workers for the world at the same time that the state encourages national affiliation. Migrant workers were encouraged to see themselves in particular relation to the state—often as individuals responsible for their own protection abroad. Skills or human capital accumulation were seen as the means of protection, and the state the generous giver of protection through the dissemination of skills.

The large government and educational apparatus that supported human capital creation made it possible for migrants to be presented by the state to employers around the world as full of literacy ability—they were trained, they had certifications that were recognized by various countries throughout the world, and they were learning new languages in order to facilitate their life in another country. TESDA training programs created “Supermaids,” the Language Skills Institute made multilingual workers who could communicate in common receiving countries, and test preparation centers helped nurses and other workers pass licensure exams that gave them access to foreign workplaces. These institutions make up the architecture of human capital creation in the Philippines. And Filipino migrants were “marketed” as distinct—they were

promoted as what Anna Guevarra would identify as the “Mercedes Benz” of workers who were better educated, better English speakers, and more modern and civilized compared to their Indonesian or Malaysian counterparts (*Marketing* 137). Their sheer accumulation of literacy abilities is what made them flexible and mobile workers to foreign employers. And migrants could think of their own literacy acquisition as heroic practices. As national heroes, *bagong bayani*, their education facilitated their movement abroad, making it possible for them to send back remittances to support not only their families but the development of their country. But I will argue that this focus on literacy as heroism encourages the worker to look upward toward an individual hero-worker, instead of to the tremendous emotional and physical costs to migrant work.

As I have argued, this attention to the new literacies that make workers flexible and mobile obscures past violences and current losses that are experienced in the pursuit of literacy and modernity. I argue that this focus on accumulation is a trend in the recent scholarship in transnational literacy studies as well. In particular, those with an interest in the education of migrant youth, point to this border crossing world, and the new literacies it brings, as illustrating that migrants have a particular advantage in literacy—they develop multiple literacies, whether it is through acquiring digital skills, speaking across languages, or mixing languages. And because of the transnational ties they maintain, they are engaged in literacy practices that connect them to family or friends in dispersed geographic locations. This attention to new literacies is meant to counter the narrative that migrant youth are lacking, particularly in English language skills or official school-based literacies. To counter the deficit model—that migrant students are lacking in abilities—transnational literacy scholarship has pointed to the additive potential of transnational literacies, whether they exist as letters, Facebook messages, or linguistic

acquisitions. I argue that in our attention to overcome the perception of deficits we have focused too much on additives, so that transnational equals accumulation, mobility equals more literacy, and movement equals gain. As essential as it is to combat deficit models of learning with celebrations of diverse ways of thinking and new literacy technologies, it has obscured the fact that transnational mobility also includes real loss—loss of literacy, loss of family ties, loss of citizenship, loss of home.

The widespread architecture of economic, political, and social actors creates a landscape through which we might identify the emotional costs of Filipino labor migration. I believe brain drain is a useful framework for understanding these emotional costs. Brain drain has been defined by economists and policy makers as a phenomenon where large numbers of highly-skilled workers leave a developing country for work in a developed country, thereby taking their literacy education and its value with them. Filipino migration scholars in the past have dismissed brain drain as relevant because of its focus on individual actors and its focus on the negative effects on national development. In her historical study of Filipino nurse migration, Catherine Choy for example, explains that we should look beyond brain drain because it does not take into account the histories of colonization that created these flows of labor. Rodriguez's ethnographic study of Filipino labor migrants and their relationship to the Philippine state points out that brain drain is an almost outdated concept—while brain drain is perceived as a kind of “nationalist betrayal,” Rodriguez found that labor migration was indeed state-sanctioned, not anti-nationalist, and seen by the government as aiding national development. However, brain drain as a discourse and a general anxiety about the migration of people through skills-based labor channels persists in policy reports, popular media accounts, and everyday conversations surrounding labor migration. Even though transnational labor flows from the Philippines might look more like

“brain circulation” (including temporary and return migration) or may not be seen as a hamper to economic development, brain drain is a prevalent discourse—a sentiment that Rodriguez can’t seem to reconcile in her footnote to the topic of brain drain:

“These discourses continue to plague the Philippines and have been especially vociferous with respect to nurses. In my interview a practicing dentist who was training to be a caregiver in order to qualify for a U.S. visa described how people in her class, including the instructor, tried to discourage her from leaving the country. ‘Don’t leave; just use your skills here,’ was their admonishment” (*Migrants* 180).

Even though research on brain drain is not clear about what effect skilled-labor migration has on economic development, the sentiment that there is something lost in the migration process persists. The phrase “just use your skills here” in Rodriguez’s account signals that skills, human capital, and other signifiers for economized literacy are perceived as having a value so large that their loss will affect national well-being. I will argue that “brain drain” as a discourse “continues to plague” the Philippines because brain drain allows Filipino citizens—both those emplaced and those on the move—a language to talk about the loss of literacy and the loss of all that literacy is supposed to bring with it including modernity, development, and economic mobility. Brain drain offers a way to track loss, not forget it.

When read through an affective lens, brain drain becomes a useful framework for thinking about the affective structures that support the movement of people. Through this lens, brain drain is not just about the brain, but about the heart and body as well. Brain drain points in particular the national body. This can be seen in Rodriguez’s description of brain drain discourse as a “plague”—like an infectious disease—to the Philippines and others have labeled the Philippines as suffering from a “skills hemorrhage” (Natad). And while brain drain suggests a

separation of brain, as rational object, from heart, brain drain scholars integrate motivations and desires into their analysis. Brain drain scholars ask: What factors motivate workers to find work overseas? What impact do their desires have on those left behind? Rather than consider migrant workers as individual actors making rational economic choices, as Choy's criticism suggests, brain drain says that there are costs and consequences when literacy moves. It highlights the families, educational institutions, and public monies that are negatively affected when migrants take their literacy with them. Thus, read through an affective lens, brain drain asks about the value of individuals to the world around them and provides a way of signifying their loss.

As a framework for thinking about loss, I argue that brain drain is an example of what I will call *literacy remains*—markers that index the emotional toll, or “what hurts,” about the pursuit of literacy (Eng 172). David Eng and David Kazanjian argue in their introduction to *Loss* that “loss is inseparable from what remains, for what is lost is known only by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read and sustained” (2). For Filipino migration workers and those who live and work with them, “brain drain” functions to signify remains—it's discourse and sentiments are markers for “what hurts” about literacy, whether it includes losing a person who has moved up or moved on through literacy, finding one's own literacies as losing value, or losing people, things, desires, or other such objects during the pursuit of literacy. As I have argued, global migration is characterized by a loss that is too often hidden by narratives of progress and development. I will argue that brain drain functions to keep loss alive in migration narratives. As a national discourse, brain drain illustrates a hope that literacy learning contributes to home-building and that an investment in literacy would lead to an investment in a place of settlement—in stability not mobility. Thus, remains may point to a loss of something that a person never had. As Manalansan has written about Filipinos as neocolonial subjects doing



unsecure contingent work, “Security is not something Filipino subjects have lost because they have never possessed it” (“Servicing” 218). Part of migrant life may include longings for security, home, fulfillment, or achievement in such a way that those objects feel lost, even though they never had them. Therefore, loss can be nostalgic, or what Eng and Kazanjian call “a prescient melancholia that emerges as the imaginative capacity to make an unobtainable object appear as if lost” (13). Thus what is important in literacy remains is less *what* is lost, but more the construction of that loss and how perceived loss functions to spur future action and future investments in or disengagements from literacy. As Eng and Kazanjian explain, loss concerns the “political, economic, and cultural dimensions of how loss is apprehended and history named—how that apprehension and naming produce the phenomenon of ‘what remains’” (6). Using their framework to think about loss as having productive and creative potential, *literacy remains* identifies attachments to the loss of literacy, and focuses on the potential of these remains as a opening up a “world of new representations and alternative meanings” (5). How do migrants interpret what they have lost as a way to imagine a new future of home and settlement? As much as brain drain is about the loss of people, brain drain provides a productive politics—a way for migrants to imagine themselves as what one of my informants Abby would say as “not just being heroes.”

### *Research Design: Literacy in the Temp Agency Nation*

My study began with preliminary research in 2011, in which I conducted interviews with Filipino nurses in the Midwest, and continued in the beginning of 2013 with research in both the Midwest and the Central Luzon region of the Philippines. When I began my study, labor migration numbers had reached an all-time high—the previous year, the Philippine state had

deployed over 1.8 million workers and received \$21.391 billion in remittances accounting for more than ten percent of the GDP (Magtulis). I began my research interested in brain drain and the ways in which literacy was transferred transnationally because of this flow of labor. Since brain drain describes the movement of “skilled labor,” I focused my research on those defined as skilled workers in the brain drain literature: college-educated (and in the Philippines, mostly English-speaking) migrants over the age of twenty-five (Clemens). English is commonly spoken in the Philippines and college-educated adults often have several years of schooling in English as a subject. The Bilingual Education Policy of 1974 made Filipino and English the media of instruction in schooling and English is considered an official language, often used in official transactions, government, and higher education (Bautista and Bolton; Lorente). As part of my research, I took an intensive Tagalog course to assist with interviewing, transcription, and text analysis. But due to my own limited speaking abilities in Tagalog, I conducted interviews in English. Because all my participants were educated at the college level and beyond, all participants had experience with college-level English coursework. My participants varied, though, in levels of daily English use and comfort speaking the language. Even those who taught English for a living articulated that they did not “feel” fluent in English, again reinforcing the affective nature of language, and they openly expressed this during interviews. As one informant Carly, an elementary education teacher of English, put it: “I like English but English doesn’t like me.” Participants would often include Tagalog words or phrases in interviews, or would use Taglish (a mix of Tagalog and English). When this occurred I would verify my translation with the informant when possible or with another bilingual Tagalog and English speaker.

Literacy researchers have gravitated toward ethnographic methods because they focus on participants’ perspectives at the same time that they highlight “the rich visible and seemingly

invisible networks” that influence the world and the practices of research participants (Sheridan 73). According to Street and Heath, to study literacy and language from an ethnographic perspective allows the researcher to “study patterns of the interaction surrounding structures and uses of language and literacy” (34). Literacy scholars are interested then in the intersections of activity, culture, and symbolic mediation. Literacy studies has engaged in a long history of ethnographic research as literacy scholars adapted “ethnography’s situated, ongoing, emic focus” (Sheridan 75). Ethnography as a primary method for studying literacy use was cemented in early literacy studies research in the 1970s and 80s, including most notably Shirley Brice Heath’s *Ways with Words*, which examined language learning among an African American community and a White community in the Piedmont region of South Carolina. Heath’s ethnographic approach allowed her to demonstrate that literacy practices are distinct to home and community as well as culturally and ideologically informed—characteristics that should inform what and how literacy educators teach in the classroom. Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole’s ethnographic study of the Vai in Liberia combatted the “great divide” theory, a theory that claimed literacy contributed to cognitive development that separated oral cultures from literate ones. Their evidence showed that the cognitive consequences of literacy are not found in a neutral form of intelligence, but in “socially organized practices in other domains” (237). Through his ethnographic study of literacy in Iran, Brian Street found that literacy as conceived as autonomous—that literacy will in and of itself, autonomously, have effects on other social and cognitive practices—didn’t match up with the literacy practices that he was observing in unofficial, outside of school contexts, prompting him to argue for an ideological model of literacy, in which reading and writing cannot be separated from the cultural and ideological assumptions that shape their use. In these early studies, researchers deployed ethnographic

methods to examine assumptions about literacy and its consequences by seeing how literacy functions “on the ground” in everyday practice of communities and groups. As Sheridan writes, a particular benefit of ethnography in literacy research is that it examines perspectives that are “misunderstood, underdeveloped, or occluded in popular understandings of an issue,” and can then inform policy, practices, and the larger structures in which literacy users are located (73). Therefore, to investigate my own research questions, I began my study with an understanding of literacy as situated social practice, in which (in contrast to functional definitions of literacy) literacies acquire meaning from the cultural context in which they are embedded (Street). I also brought with me an understanding that a macro-view of literacy can be researched through examining the material tools and the social actions surrounding individual literacy use, and that these can be gleaned from collecting oral histories or literacy narratives in which participants articulate their memories of literacy learning (Brandt).

I used ethnographically informed methods to conduct my research, including forty-two “semi-structured interviews” (Fontana and Frey) lasting between one to two hours in length, daily observations, short conversations, and a systematic collection of official state documents, popular media accounts, migrant online writing, and other texts related to contemporary Filipino labor migration that were collected both at field sites and through online resources. My study was transnational in design. My preliminary pre-dissertation research with Filipino immigrant nurses in the Midwest indicated that a “culture of migration” (Choy) in the Philippines fostered by “literacy sponsors” (Brandt) inspired much of migrants’ decisions and motivations for acquiring literacy. To better understand this culture of migration, I decided to interview migrants in both the U.S. and the Philippines, as well as those involved in the process of labor migration from educational institutions, government agencies, and labor recruitment agencies. My

participants included both OFWs, referring to temporary contract workers who usually work in the Middle East, Southeast Asia or Europe, and *balikbayans* (nation returnees), a term generally referring to permanent migrants living in North America (Rafael). I also chose to interview in both locations in the US and the Philippines, as *balikbayans* and OFWs create two different cohorts of transnational labor. In general, larger numbers of *balikbayans* migrated in the 1960s-80s as professionals in fields such as nursing and engineering. OFWs began migrating in large numbers in the 1970s, but the trend has increased in the 2000s, particularly as nursing and other professional occupation opportunities decreased in the U.S.

I chose a metropolitan city in the Midwest and the Central Luzon region as research sites mainly for ease of access in entering the sites. However, these were rich sites for theoretical and historical reasons as well. The Midwest has been home to one of the country's larger Filipino populations outside California as many migrated to work in area hospitals. There is a large population of Filipinos and a long-tradition of Filipino migration and recruitment in the area (Choy). Central Luzon is the area of the Philippines with the third largest population of transnational migrants and third-highest number of higher education institutions (after the National Capital Region, including metro Manila, and Calabarzon, just southeast of Manila). Pampanga, the province in Central Luzon where I focused my research has long been a "global" place—it is flanked by two former US military bases, including Clark Airbase, which is now a hub for business process outsourcing centers and other foreign development.

To recruit participants for my study, I relied on personal contacts and their networks. In the US, I relied on friendship networks and a contact from a healthcare training school where I had experience teaching an English composition course. Through snowball or chain-referral sampling (Biernaki and Waldorf; Bogden and Biklen), these contacts helped me recruit Filipino

migrants in the area, who also referred me to other potential immigrants to interview. I used similar snowball sampling methods when soliciting participation in my study in the Central Luzon region, where I relied on family and friendship networks and in particular a personal contact who was an educator in the region and knew of many teachers who were planning to go abroad or who had been abroad. These participants then put me in contact with other friends and family members in different occupations who had overseas work experience or who were in the process of preparing for overseas work. I continued to use this method of sampling until patterns began to emerge and repeat themselves in participant data, namely that categories of affect management began to solidify by occupation, education experience, and host country. Those who I interviewed in the Philippines were in various stages of departure and arrival—some were in between work contracts, others were preparing to leave or had been home from overseas work for several years.

To gain an understanding of how literacy education influenced their labor migration, I asked migrant workers about their experiences in education in the Philippines, their process of migration, their work experiences, daily tasks at the workplace, and their understanding of national identity when working abroad. (See Appendix A for interview protocol). In total, I interviewed twenty-five future, current, and past Filipino migrant workers across different occupations, age groups, genders, and countries of destination (See Table 1). Only a third of my participants were men, which is lower than the ratio at the national level. According to the gender breakdown of new hires processed by the POEA in 2010, fifty-five percent of migrants were women and forty-five percent were male. However, the majority of my participants were from health care and other care-related professions including education and caregiving, and these occupations tend to have significantly more women. For example, among new hires in nursing

processed through the POEA in 2010, 1,828 were men and 10,254 were female; 301 teachers were male, and 679 teachers were female. In contrast, business and technology-related professions tend to have more men: for example, 280 men and ninety-four women were computer programmers among new hires processed by the POEA in 2010<sup>2</sup>. An overwhelming majority of temporary migrant workers work in the Middle East, though only two of my participants had work experience there, indicating a limitation to my study. The majority of participants I interviewed worked in the US or in various countries in Asia, such as Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Thailand. Only a third of my participants were permanent migrants; the rest were on temporary contracts.

To supplement my interviews with migrant workers, I conducted seventeen interviews with key informants in the labor migration process including labor recruiters, government workers, and college educators and administrators. In Central Luzon, I interviewed ten different administrators and teachers in three different higher education institutions: a private Catholic university, a public technical state university, and a public city college. I relied on personal contacts to introduce me to head administrators in each institution, including presidents, vice presidents and deans of the schools, who would then refer me to teachers and other administrators to interview. Because I knew that labor migration was highly dependent on occupation and ability to pass licensure exams and other forms of accreditation, these schools each allowed me a different perspective on the education supporting the labor migration process. Students from the public technical university and the public city college were more likely to focus on occupations such as information technology, computer servicing and programming, education, and business administration. The private Catholic university has historically ranked

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<sup>2</sup> These give us a limited view of national trends—they do not include permanent migrants processed through the Commission of Filipinos Overseas, or reveal the numbers of workers already abroad—but they give us a sense of trends of workers who are seeking to go abroad for the first time.

among the top universities in pass rates of the nursing licensure exam in the region, but during the time of my research had shifted their focus from nursing to business, tourism, accounting, and communications as the numbers of nurse migration decreased in the last decade. In interviews, I asked administrators and educators about the ways they prepare their students for work in the global market place, the ways they believe labor migration has affected their curriculums and programs, and how their institution has responded to regulation and monitoring by Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU), and other accrediting agencies. (See Appendix B for Interview Protocol).

I was introduced through a family contact to a president of a labor recruitment agency while in the US, and he allowed me to observe and interview other employees in the agency when I arrived in the Philippines. The agency was located in Metro Manila's most populated city, Quezon City, where I conducted observations and interviewed the agency owner and a documentation officer. I was also introduced via personal contact to a head administrator at the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA), where I was able to observe the documentation processing division and interview employees there. Through a referral, I interviewed an administrator of the Overseas Workers Welfare Association (OWWA), and observed a Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS), which is mandatory for all migrant workers. In total, I interviewed four employees in POEA and OWWA (See Table 2) and three employees of the labor recruitment agency.

During my initial interviews with migrant workers, recruitment agencies and government agencies appeared frequently in participant narratives. Through these key informant interviews, I was able to gain valuable insight into the practices and values of these institutions first hand.



Labor recruitment agencies have an intimate and tense relationship with the state, as they are even more highly regulated than migrant workers themselves. In state promotional documents, such as press releases and annual reports, labor recruitment agencies are pitted to be at odds with the state, a move that allows the state to appear to be in line with migrant workers interests. Interviews and observations with government agencies allowed me to view the complications and intimate interactions in what are often represented as mechanical bureaucratic processes. The “state” was not just a monolithic entity, but a dynamic and fluid one. Together, these data collection methods allowed me to examine the education of labor migrants from multiple perspectives, a practice that I believe mirrors the negotiations that make up migrant life.

### *Transnational and Multi-sited Approaches to Ethnography*

In this study, I departed slightly from traditional literacy ethnographies that focus on one geographically defined community or site by instead utilizing transnational and multi-sited approaches (Falzon; Marcus). Importantly, transnationalism is about both the actual movement of bodies, capital, and information across national borders, but also about re-conceptualizing space itself. Transnationalism has loosely been defined as the de-centering of the nation-state, and first made its appearance in anthropological work in the 1990s that examined migrant communities keeping ties with their home countries (Lee). As many scholars have argued (Chu; Lionett and Shih), transnationalism and transnational flows are not a new phenomena. People and goods have always circulated across the globe. But recent developments—late capitalism, the development of neoliberalism, increased transportation and communication technologies, among other phenomena—have intensified the examination of transnational flows. Scholars have been careful to make a distinction between “transnationalism” and the related concepts of

“globalization” and “diaspora.” For example, Lionett and Shih argue that transnationalism is a consequence of globalization. While globalization and global forces tend to focus on cultural homogenization, the transnational designates spaces and practices by border-crossing agents. Therefore, they argue that the concept of transnationalism allows for spaces of exchange where hybridization is possible. Similarly, Grewal argues for the importance of remembering that globalization does not extend across the world equally and that the transnational is a more “humble” framework, a more adequate label for phenomena that can be of variable scale and distribution. Grewal also goes as far as to suggest that the global and our understanding of globalization are actually imaginaries created by transnational discourses. Globalization is an “object of knowledge” produced by the knowledge passed along through “transnational connectivities” (23). Therefore, this work suggests that transnationalism is both constituted by and constitutes globalization, but transnationalism as a framework allows us to see particular aspects of global activity—heterogeneity, hybridization, lateral exchange, and incompleteness of connectivity.

Transnationalism questions the traditional notion in ethnographic work that the singular field site is a container of a particular set of social relations. As Falzon argues, “Transnationalism no doubt posed the major twentieth century challenge to ethnographic methods of inquiry and units of analysis by destabilizing the embedded-ness of social relations in particular communities and places” (6). Deploying a transnational lens to examine brain drain allowed me to see how participants maintained complicated attachments with the Philippines even while they engaged in work abroad—in fact, I argue that their affective attachments with the state come to shape and define how it is that they work. In addition, a transnational lens prompts questions about the consequences of global movement in the country of origin. For example, this lens allowed me to

see that Filipino educators who do not travel abroad still experience a complex sense of place as their spatial location is influenced through transnational flows, and that migrants see the value of their literacy and education shifting as they travel from one nation to another. In Chapter Three, I show how this worked in the case of Maria, a college-educated teacher who worked in Singapore and Hong Kong as a maid, and says “You are a professional in the Philippines, but you are a maid here.” The social relations, as well as the desires and imaginaries of my participants stretch far beyond and even questioned “place.”

This new way of conceiving place has challenged ethnographers to develop new methods, including both multi-sited research (Falzon; Marcus) and global ethnography (Gille and Ó Riain). My research design integrated both of these approaches. By conducting research in multiple locations, my research design paralleled transnationalism’s focus on spatial de-centeredness and constructed “the empirical field” through various geographic localities (Faist et al. 148). Multi-sited ethnography, Faist et al. argue, does not look at social life in a single-container, but is interested in the extension of social and symbolic ties across various sites. The essence of multi-sited research as articulated by Marcus is to follow people, connections, associations and relationships across space. In multi-sited research, the “global” isn’t a homogenous force, but played out in multiple locations in different ways. As Falzon describes it, multi-sited research design “proceeds by a series of juxtapositions in which the global is collapsed into and made an integral part of parallel, related, local situations, rather than something monolithic or external to them” (2). Taking into account traditional considerations in ethnography—participation and depth of description—Falzon argues that “If our object is mobile and/or spatially dispersed, being likewise surely becomes a form of participant observation” and “if conventional depth is hard to come by in unsettled circumstances, that is probably as things

should be, in the sense that it represents the way our people themselves experience the world” (9). Thus, Falzon argues that we should rethink the ways that we conceptualize participant observation and depth to begin with—not only does transnationalism create new social arrangements, but it prompts a different perspective from which we should think about what it means to observe cultural activity. It became clear to me as I conducted research at different sites, traveling back and forth from Manila to Pampanga, and across different universities, government offices and homes, that my research was laying out a landscape, codifying the different markers or nodes that make up migrant trajectories, and the vast constellation of institutions and actors that do the labor of creating human capital. I did move in a way that could be described as horizontally instead of vertical—that “depth” which is so much the concern of ethnography was achieved in a widespread horizontal space rather than in a singular vertical space. This horizontal movement allowed me to examine the different points of departure and arrival in migrant trajectories from various perspectives. Through researching across different sites, I was able to see how literacy and its sites of learning and practice are mobile and spatially dispersed.

Even though my research moved across different locations, my research still investigated the politics of place-making. In particular, I spent extended time in one province, Pampanga, in Central Luzon and was able to trace the ways that educators in the province came to understand Pampanga as a particular place with its own past, its own character, its own problems, and its own future. The material life of Pampanga—its central objects, its priorities places, its unlivable places, its paths, and its borders—all came to life in relation to the migrant body. This is illustrated most clearly in my interview with Abby, an educator in Pampanga that I discuss in Chapter Four. Abby took me on a tour of the major government offices, and discussed such

mundane everyday practices as traffic, crosswalks, pick-pocketing, and new condo developments, in ways that connected them to various transnational forces. Thus space and place was still central in this multi-sited framework, but it was constantly shifting and in the process of being produced both by people in the space and forces from afar. In understanding Abby's work as ethnographic and my own work as an ethnographer, I draw additionally on Zsuzsa Gille and Seán Ó Riain's approach to global ethnography which claims that the ethnographer is engaged in place-making projects—projects that “seek to define new kinds of places, with new definitions of social relations and their boundaries” (271). In global ethnography, Gille and Ó Riain argue, ethnographers investigate how temporal and spatial boundaries are deeply contested. Global ethnography, they argue, is located firmly in places, but also “conceives of those places as themselves globalized with multiple external connections, porous and contested boundaries, and social relations that are constructed across multiple spatial scales” (291). In their research, Gille and Ó Riain critique Marcus's multi-sited methods, arguing that it takes place for granted and doesn't leave room for place-making, and the production and transformation of sites. They argue, “history remains an afterthought rather than a factor” (288). Thus what Gille and Ó Riain claim is missing from multi-sited research is temporal experience. I address their critique in considering “literacy remains” as a framework for thinking about global movement alongside a history of place.

### *Data Analysis*

When I began my research on brain drain from the Philippines, I set out to conduct a study of literacy that focused on moments of learning to read or write, on the materials of literacy such as technologies, and on what Brandt calls literacy sponsors—agents who enable and support literacy as well as withhold or suppress literacy in order to gain some advantage by it. These

units of data analysis have been established in much qualitative research on literacy (Heath, Street, Brandt) and this focus on literacy I believed would contribute to already existing research on migrant education in the Philippines that has indicated the importance of reading, writing, and language use as a part of the migration process. For example, in their study of nurse migration, Masselink and Lee argued that higher education institutions acted like “migrant institutions” by actively promoting and facilitating the process of labor migration, including creating partnerships with recruitment agencies and licensure testing centers. Research from Filipino studies, including the work of Robyn Rodriguez, Catherine Choy, Beatriz P. Lorente, and Anna Guevarra readily pointed to the history of an American education system, English-language fluency, and high-skilled knowledge work as integral and essential to the Filipino migration process. Because of this existing research, I expected literacy education to be highly influential in facilitating brain drain and a major part of the lives of the “high-skilled” workers I intended to interview. However, when I began to interview migrants, I quickly discovered that the divisions between “skilled” and “unskilled” work in brain drain didn’t hold up. A handful of these skilled college-educated adults I interviewed were working abroad or were going to work abroad in so-called unskilled or semi-skilled occupations in the service sector. In addition, the migrant workers I interviewed that were working in occupations categorized as skilled (i.e., those in professions such as nursing, education, or IT professions) often described their work in ways that were embodied and emotional, not solely cognitive. This led me to believe that “skills” itself as a category for dividing workers is a constructed and fluid category—one upheld, negotiated, questioned or resisted by migrant workers, the state, and private partners, for various purposes.

During my interviews with migrant workers, I diligently asked about moments of reading and writing, looking for sponsors, technologies, artifacts, or any writing and reading to appear in

their migration trajectories. Although reading and writing existed throughout their descriptions of their experiences, they were often not the most important moments, nor the moments filled with tension and complication. When migrants discussed moments of language acquisition, reading or writing such as letters, documents, or computer use, and other literacy practices, they described them as functional, mechanical, and holding little meaning to their migration trajectories.

Instead, I found myself drawn to how migrants described the emotional labor in their work lives and in their engagements with their families and the state. In these moments, migrants described intense intellectual engagement, but they described this in forms that often went beyond textual representation. Taking a closer look at how migrants were trained to work and what they did at work convinced me that there was more to understanding their literacy practices than simply how or what they were reading and writing. It soon became clear to me that affect management included more critical thinking and engagement (more higher-order thinking) than the literacy tasks I set out to study when my research began.

The format of semi-structured interviews allowed migrants to shape the conversation and go off-topic, and often they did. Migrants spent a great deal of time, talking about family members, co-workers, employers, their feelings about the government, and the overwhelming presence of sadness, regret, anger, and hope that filled the spaces of their lives. When I began to see that many migrants brought up these topics during the course of collecting interviews, I began to ask follow up questions asking about the body, families, citizenship, and feelings, and other affective resonances. I kept conceptual memos where I began to take note of references to emotion, to discipline, and to place and reflected on their relation to the literacy practices that I did hear in their interviews. To analyze my data, I drew on grounded theory strategies for inductive analysis (Charmaz), which included a close reading of interview transcripts, documents

and field notes and “open or initial coding” for identifying social processes and events in the data. I used the specific instances in my data to help me draw general theoretical conclusions. Aligning with the principles of grounded theory, I also tested the validity of my interpretations by assessing how the analytical categories and assertions I developed held up across different sets of data. In this way, I understood analysis as Dyson and Genishi have described it as “piece work”—“weaving together different pieces together into a patterned quilt, an interpretive case study” (111). This involved identifying relevant data and meticulously drawing out connections in order to tell some larger story about how literacy is made meaningful for Filipinos in a culture of migration.

I organized my data by case studies where I grouped together informants whose interviews revealed theoretical similarities. Following J. Clyde Mitchell’s method of analysis, each case study was not chosen because it was representative or typical of the data as a whole, but because it is a “telling” case study, showing how general theoretical principles become manifest in the particulars of the case. As Mitchell explains,

“From this point of view, the search for a ‘typical’ case for analytic exposition is likely to be less fruitful than the search for a ‘telling’ case in which the particular circumstances surrounding a case, serve to make previously obscure theoretical relationships suddenly apparent [...] Case studies used in this way are clearly more than ‘apt illustrations.’

Instead they are means whereby general theory may be developed.” (239)

In my own data analysis, therefore, I identified participants that would serve as “telling” case studies. What interested me were stories, discourses, orientations, and events that departed from cliché and oft-repeated discourses about Filipino labor migration, literacy, and learning, as these telling cases revealed what was taken for granted, what was assumed, and what contradictions



existed in ideas about migrant workers and transnational literacy learning. As I will further detail in my chapter overview, each chapter showcases a case study focusing on one main theoretical discussion. The narrative data in each chapter doesn't serve merely as anecdotal evidence or an illustration of the theory, but develops and generates the theory. Like all case studies, my research suggests findings about my specific site and informants—including Filipino labor migrants from Central Luzon, one labor recruitment agency in Quezon City, and a small section of government employees in Manila. But these findings also offer directions for generalizable theories about labor migration from the Philippines, as well transnational literacy, affective ways of learning, and global economic development that may provide insight into the conditions for literacy learning in other developing countries whose economies are dependent on migration labor.

In interpreting my analysis, I took an approach consistent with post-structural perspectives of qualitative research that all inquiry reflects the standpoint of the researcher, that the researcher actively shapes the knowledge created, and that all knowledge is partial. I see my data as what Altheide and Johnson call evidentiary narratives, where evidence is seen as communicative process. Thus, I viewed my interpretations through the limitations of my research perspective and reflected on my own research position in the writing up process. As a female graduate student and second-generation Filipina from the US, I was an outsider to the informants I interviewed, but also shared important connections with them. I found that having family from Pampanga was important to access sites and particular informants. To many of my informants I was seen as a Kapampangan coming home or Filipina American wanting to know about my roots. Many were interested in helping a young student, remembering what it was like to be a student themselves. It was evident by the way I talked (my informants would describe it as a fast

American English) that I was not “one of them” but had enough of a connection to them and their spaces that they were willing to engage in conversation as a way to “help” me. In interviews with government officials and labor recruitment agencies, I positioned myself as a curious researcher who knew very little about the intricate details of labor migration, their institutions, and their jobs. In these interviews, I was less like family or a neighbor, as I was with migrants, but more like a student, prompting my informants to take on authoritative roles as teachers giving me insight into how labor migration worked.

### *Chapter Overview*

*Literacy Remains* examines the ways that Filipino migrants, across different age groups and occupations, engage in affective literacies to survive the daily traumas of migrant life. As their lives are spread across countries, institutions, and other locales, each chapter focuses on different sites in which migrants engage the state and the state’s demands: higher education, the workplace, vocational training, labor recruitment agencies, and state bureaucracies. Chapter One, “Brain Drain and an Economy of Affect” lays out the theoretical framework for the project by examining why a study of brains paradoxically leads us to a study of affect. In this chapter, I examine the economic concepts of human capital and human capital externalities and in doing so trace the emergence of the “individual” as a viable and valuable economic subject. In brain drain literature, the individual becomes an economic subject with tremendous effect on national well-being. If we take Watkins’ claim that the story of human capital is the myth of the autonomous individual, then brain drain offers a story of how individuals get constituted in the first place by focusing on the effects of human capital loss. I argue that this work of individual constitution is affective literacy work. In this chapter, I detail a Philippine education system that targets global

competition and relies on 1.) meeting international competency standards and 2.) regulation of higher education institutions at the national level to do so. Educational institutions—and the government agencies and private sector partners that work alongside them—create a landscape of winners, heroes, and “topnotchers” who “heat up” (Watkins) the intensity of competition at every turn.

Chapter Two “Affective Literacies and the Emotional Toil of Professionalization” defines the concept of affective literacies by drawing on research illustrating the intellectual work of the body and emotions. Following Mazzarella’s work, I understand affects as pointing to a “zone where emotion intersects with processes taking place at a more corporeal level” and have a dialectical relationship to symbolic mediation (291). As literacies are concerned with processes and practices of symbolic mediation as well as the politics of language and schooling, affect opens up an additional dimension to representation that links symbolic practices into a larger network of sensual corporeal life. As I will illustrate in this chapter and subsequent chapters, affect management is the means by which migrants practice critical literacy work when professionalized literacies and intellectually constraining workplaces offer little room for critical engagement. I focus this chapter on the narratives of two migrant professionals—Hope, a nurse in the US and Nina, a guidance counselor who attempted to find work in Singapore. This chapter illustrates that as the pressures of global competition and regulation prompted them to work toward more and more human capital, they drew on their affective literacies to “cope” and to survive daily pressures. Affect management emerges as a high-skill, higher-order thinking activity for these workers, and in contrast, work that is normally considered high-skilled such as writing tasks, research, and language acquisition, are experienced as mechanical and more like lower-order thinking activities.

Chapter Three, “Affective Attachments: The Transfer of Care in Temporary Migration” builds on the concept of affective literacy in Chapter Two by considering how the concept of affective literacies shapes our understanding of the way literacy and human capital move across borders. In this chapter I argue that rather than thinking of literacy as moving from point A to point B as we would understand the movement of texts, affective literacies move through an ongoing affective attachment to the state. I focus specifically on temporary care workers, who are considered the state’s most vulnerable workers, and examine how the state attempts to present itself as a caring body and in contrast present workers as rational unfeeling bodies. These affective dynamics ultimately work to remove from the state the responsibility of welfare for its worker citizens and places the responsibility on workers. I focus in particular on the literacy experiences of two migrant care workers—Luz, a teacher on her way to becoming a caregiver in Israel, and Maria, a teacher who worked for several years as a domestic worker in Hong Kong and Singapore. I illustrate how Luz and Maria engage in the affective literacies of “disaffection” (Manalansan “Servicing”) and discernment (Brennan) to reimagine *matiyaga* (patience).

In Chapter Four, “Reading Remains: Atmospheres and Archives of Loss” I examine the ways that brain drain functions for migrants as *literacy remains*—a way of indexing “what hurts” (Eng 172) about literacy and a way of apprehending the losses experienced in the pursuit of literacy and modernity. I argue that brain drain is a valuable signifier for migrants. It acts as a marker for an important kind of national loss that I described in Chapter Three—the loss of state responsibility for the welfare of its citizens. In this chapter, I examine how apprehending loss prompts imaginings of different temporalities and spaces. In particular, I analyze the migration narratives of Ray, an auto service technician who worked for seventeen years in Saudi Arabia and Abby, an educator in Pampanga who actively encourages her students not to leave for

migrant work. Ray and Abby's narratives highlight the way that the losses of transnational migration lead to productive engagement with the nation state, where migrants and citizens actively read the "affective atmosphere" (Anderson) as holding an archive of those losses. Both Ray and Abby come to use their feelings of melancholia as ways to imagine (and struggle to find) a different future for the Philippines and for themselves.

In Chapter Five, "Intimate Technologies: Documents, Affect, and State Authority," I examine how affects work to structure and support the Philippine bureaucracy, and in particular the documentary process for migrant workers. Counterintuitive as it may seem, I argue that state documents do not distance migrant workers from the state, but instead create an intimacy with the state. Migrants use their affective literacies to treat the state as employer, demand efficiency, and question the state's performance of authenticity and authority. In this chapter I draw on my interviews and observations with two women who work to facilitate migrant movement through the processing of documents: Melanie, a labor employment officer who handles migrant worker documents for the POEA and Cristina, a documentation officer who works in a labor recruitment agency in Manila. They both reveal that the most difficult part of their job is not remembering the many policies and procedures that their documents enforce, but in harnessing and controlling migrant desires. Together these chapters reveal a vast "architecture" of production that works to create mobile workers. However, workers are not just moved abroad, but they also move—they engage in affective literacies to make their losses visible and imagine new possibilities for themselves and the nation state.

### *Introduction Tables*

Migrant Worker Informants			
Occupation	Number	Gender	Destination Countries
Service Workers (Domestic Workers, Caregivers, Hospitality)	4	4 Female	Hong Kong, Singapore, Israel, UK
Professional Technical Workers (Business, Science, Computers, Nurses, Teachers)	18	13 Female, 5 Male	Thailand, Indonesia, Kuwait, Singapore, US, Canada
Production	1	1 Male	Saudi Arabia, Canada
Clerical/Administration	2	1 Female, 1 Male	Singapore

*Table 1: Demographic information for migrant worker informants*

Industry and State Key Informants			
Location	Number	Gender	Occupations
Private Catholic University	5	4 Female, 1 Male	Department heads, instructors
Public Technical State University	3	2 Male, 1 Female	Student affairs administrators, financial administrators, instructors
Public City College	1	Female	Department head
Labor Recruitment Agency Employees	3	1 Male, 2 Female	President, Owner, Documentation Officer
Government Agency Employees	4	1 Male, 3 Female	POEA and OWWA employees

*Table 2: Demographic information for industry and state key informants*

## Chapter One

### Brain Drain and an Economy of Affect

Great are the advantages that people following the same trade get from near neighborhood to one another: the mysteries of the trade become no mysteries; but are, as it were, in the air.

—Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics* (225)

This chapter explores why brain drain—an economic phenomenon focused on individuals and their minds—is paradoxically an economic framework that makes visible affective literacies—ways of mediating the realm of the heart, body, and senses. First, I look in particular at how literacy scholars have drawn from human capital theory to explain the place of literacy in economic activity. Both Deborah Brandt and Evan Watkins point out the problem with seeing human capital as an individual investor pursuing individual benefits—what economists would conceive of as “private returns” to an investment in education. But what Watkins begins to point out is that the “individual” is a construct created by a constellation of forces—in other words, human capital requires some effort or labor to bring it into being in the first place. Looking to brain drain extends this point even further. Brain drain is concerned not so much with individuals as human capital entities that are lost but with the external effects of human capital that are lost—how human capital yields social returns that go beyond the private returns of the individual. What exactly these returns are and how far they extend is not agreed upon, but in economics literature have included increased productivity for other workers, among other benefits. Following Watkins, I will argue that not only is there some labor to create the appearance of human capital, but there is also effort to sustain the appearance of its “externalities.” This is the realm of affective work that I will argue takes place both at the

individual level, and across other economic actors such as higher education institutions and state agencies.

As Watkins argues, education is increasingly embedded in a field of competition that requires a process of “heating up” expectations in order to get workers on board in human capital production. In the Philippines, this requires the appearance of heroes and topnotchers who are configured as the winners who beat the odds, and who have, importantly, an affective and economic attachment to the state as “migrant citizens” (Rodriguez, *Migrants* xx). As I have argued in the Introduction, it became evident in my research that as migrant’s described their migration trajectories and their work experiences, affect management was the high-skill work that made up the brain drain—the work requiring critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation and other markers of higher-order thinking. In Chapter Three, I offer more detail about how this works in temporary labor migration and in particular, in state policies and training practices that show the Philippine state’s investment in affective literacy. In Chapter Two I explain more fully the concept of affective literacies as an intellectual and embodied form of economic labor focusing in particular on two migrant professionals. In this chapter, I focus on higher education institutions in the Philippines and in particular how they lay out an economic landscape of competition that makes affect value-producing work.

#### *From Individual Investor to the Nucleus of an Atom*

Human capital is loosely defined as stock of knowledge or characteristics embodied in a person that contributes to worker productivity. From its early formulations, human capital has focused on individual private investment and individual private returns. Both Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz argued as early as the 1960s that we should think of education not as consumption, but rather an investment. Their primary concern was to understand increases in income at the



national level that couldn't be explained by the growth of physical capital alone. In Schultz's 1960 presidential address delivered at the American Economic Association, he explained what he believed to constitute investment practices:

“Much of what we call consumption constitutes investment in human capital. Direct expenditures on education, health, and internal migration to take advantage of better job opportunities are clear examples. Earnings forgone by mature students attending school and by workers acquiring on-the-job training are equally clear examples. Yet nowhere do these enter into our national accounts. The use of leisure time to improve skills and knowledge is widespread and it too is unrecorded. In these and similar ways the quality of human effort can be greatly improved and its productivity enhanced.” (1)

Schultz argues that economists should not “shy away from investment in man” (2) and should not hesitate in including health, migration, and even leisure time into market activity. All these things can be thought of as investments in market productivity, an idea that labor scholars like Melissa Gregg would later point out spreads work to every corner of life—there is not a time when one is outside the possibility for work. Schultz recognized that economists might be hesitant to take up the word “human capital” because “the mere thought of investment in human beings is offensive to some among us. [...] It seems to reduce man once again to a mere material component, to something akin to property” (2). But rather than make an individual simply a cog in the machine of economic productivity, Schultz claimed that on the contrary, “by investing in themselves, people can enlarge the range of choice available to them” (3). The productive capacity of human beings makes up a huge amount of wealth, he argued, and was the core of economic development. People invest in themselves significantly, and if we don't recognize this, we might be left with thinking of labor as only manual “requiring little knowledge and skill” (3).

Thus to Schultz, to recognize human capital and to take up the examination of “investment in man” was to make knowledge and skill visible in economic activity.

For Becker, the economist who would be most often associated with human capital theory, education was the primary form of investment and educational achievement was the primary means of measuring human capital. He saw these as “activities that influence future monetary and psychic income by increasing resources in people” (9). To Becker, any person engaging in education was an individual investor making individual rational choices. These choices were characterized by “utility maximization, a forward-looking stance, consistent rationality, and stable and persistent preferences” (Teixiera 1). Watkins argues that the key word in Becker’s framework is “investing.” He claims, “Becker’s agent is imagined as if already an individual capitalist entrepreneur; a minicapitalist rather than a worker” (35). The same could be said for Schultz who suggested human capital makes it possible for all to become capitalists: “Laborers have become capitalists not from a diffusion of the ownership of corporation stocks, as folklore would have it, but from the acquisition of knowledge and skill that have economic value” (3). According to Becker, the worker can use classic neoclassical principles to gauge the return on investment. Thus, the individual investing in human capital can make rational decisions about what kinds of rewards to expect. As Watkins claims about Becker’s work, “the idea of individual choices made by rational investors remains the central theme [...] the closer one comes to performing such calculations and being guided by them, the better investment return is likely to be” (36). Watkins, as well as educational theorist Alexander Sidorkin, both criticize the focus on education as investment because it hides the fact that there is effort expended to gain it. Sidorkin argues simply that education should be seen as labor instead of an investment. He claims:

“Indeed, if people invest in themselves, what exactly do they invest? Aside from some insignificant [...] direct costs, the lion’s share of this investment is students’ own efforts. It is not just time, for learning can only happen when a student expends some energy, exercises her mind and body, and makes a deliberate effort [...] there are no demonstrable differences between creating one’s own human capital and working.” (161-162)

Sidorkin would go on to argue that schools need to provide incentives as reminders to students that what they are engaging in is a kind of labor. Watkins, whose argument I will discuss in more detail, claims that human capital is an idea itself that must be produced and this is the labor that Becker’s model overlooks.

The idea of education as an individual investment would come to inspire much literacy studies research. Deborah Brandt presents literacy as something that can already be folded in to existing formulations of human capital as an investment in intellectual capacities. Brandt agrees that acquiring literacy as part of the education process is an investment, but the returns are not as predictable as Becker describes. Brandt claimed that literacy was more like a material resource. Therefore literacy was not just a thing to invest in, à la Becker, but it was also the input and output—the means with which one could invest and also the return they got out of it. At each stage of literacy learning and each subsequent moment of investment, literacy was put in and the hope was more literacy would come out. She argues:

“Literacy is a resource in the way that electricity is a resource: Its circulation keeps lights on. [...] seeing literacy as a productive resource in economic terms makes it analogous in some ways to natural resources or raw materials. What land was to the agricultural

economy or iron to the manufacturing economy, people's skills are to the information economy" (6).

Thus Brandt saw literacy as seeping into more parts of the human capital process than Becker acknowledged—it created the market itself. Brandt was concerned with the materiality of literacy and reminded us that literacy existed as part of larger material systems. Her research interviews took place in a Wisconsin town, a “dairy capital” that experienced intrusions of corporate agribusiness into dairy communities. It was rapid change, she argued, that was at the heart of understanding literacy in the postindustrial society—what it meant to be literate shifted with each new generation. This caused a major tension that was embedded in the pursuit of literacy—it may provide democratic access but at the same time it is a powerful tool for exclusion and stratification. She writes, “Literacy is valuable—and volatile—property” (2). Thus like any other capital, human capital could be concentrated for the haves and difficult to access for the have-nots.

Brandt also extends the field of human capital by articulating a link between individuals and the market that is more complex than rational decision-making. She is interested instead in the co-constitutive relationship between literacy development and economic structures. To provide an analytical framework that connects the individual to economic forces, Brandt used the concept of “literacy sponsors.” The concept of literacy sponsors focuses on who or what underwrites occasions of literacy learning and use and literacy sponsors serve as the “delivery systems for the economies of literacy, the means by which these forces present themselves to—and through—individual learners” (19). These systems are not always purely economic, as Brandt also includes churches and other community organizations into her account of sponsors. For Brandt, individuals existed as carriers of economic forces and interests, and also embodied

these larger forces in their daily moments of literacy learning. The individual is still the central economic actor for her, just as it was with Schultz and Becker, but she also connects the individual to the institutions outside the individual—the individual and the macrostructure more as a general entity are the two primary players in her economic formulation for literacy.

Watkins extends this even further by arguing that the “individual” in the human capital analysis must be produced—that is, the individual as an economic subject is constituted and that the individual must understand herself to be an economic subject in the first place. Watkins argues that when we assume the individual, we lose the work of human capital because “While human capital in whatever form appears as if it were an independent resource whose value is set by the market, its development requires an immense architecture of production and support structures existing in the background” (9). The problem, then, is that the focus on the individual as a priori and inherently an economic agent makes this labor invisible. Watkins critiques both Becker’s focus on the individual investor as well as Yochai Benkler’s concept of human communicative capacity in *The Wealth of Networks*, which he likens to a new kind of human capital for the networked information economy. He argues that Becker and Benkler assume the individual as a pre-set figure: “the investor comes first, as an individual already in a position to make crucial choices about whether and how to acquire human capital assets” (21). In Benkler’s framework, the new mode of production is commons-based peer production where large numbers of people work cooperatively in non-hierarchical groups that are decentralized and participant driven. But despite the fact that Benkler’s framework of production focuses on the collective, Watkins claims that Benkler, just like and even more so than Becker, prioritizes the individual. He argues, “commons-based peer production is finally all about enhancing the experiences of the autonomous individual” (40). This is because human communicative capacity

is represented as innate ability in the individual—not work at all, and this way of thinking about production is all about expanding choice—the importance is on the individual and their right to choose how and when to use their work. Watkins goes on to explain that this framework offered by Benkler creates a new kind of human capital which he labels “just-in-time human capital”:

“The just-in-time version of human capital is not about targeting the obsolescence of any specific skill or knowledge [...] it is the very idea of human capital as a reserve that has been made obsolete. In a just-in-time system, human capital is individual power of action on the occasion, rather than the individual acquisition of a reserve that can be mobilized for any occasion.” (61)

Therefore, Watkins believes that this new form of human capital actually reinforces the place of the individual because it sees the individual as the primary agent of power, thereby by removing the architecture of production necessary to create human capital. Just-in-time human capital just looks like the expansion of a field of choices for the individual, rather than any kind of collective participant-driven labor. Because of this progression from Becker to Benkler, Watkins claims that “The story of human capital is the story of removal, the progressive elimination of any actual labor from the concept of a human capital resource” (99). When you remove the labor, Watkins argues, it is difficult to see how literacy produces value. Therefore, to understand literacy and to make literacy more visible, Watkins argues to move away from human capital altogether.

With this debate around human capital in mind, we can complicate the idea of brain drain or “human capital flight” as it has been called. If we take Watkins’ claim that the story of human capital is that of the growing myth of the autonomous individual, then brain drain may offer a story of how individuals get constituted in the first place because brain drain focuses on the

effects of the individual—the externalities of human capital. What is clear from the brain drain literature is that brain drain is less concerned about the loss of individuals and more concerned about the loss of human capital externalities—the supposed transaction spillovers that are the result of human capital. Externalities extend the economic analysis and the scope of economic activity past the individual to society—externalities investigate the social return as opposed to the private return. While theorists like Becker and Schultz were concerned with the private returns of human capital, brain drain scholars were concerned with a decrease in social returns to a larger national body. In other words, brain drain is about understanding the impact of an individual's removal, and therefore it might illuminate for us the work of constituting the individual as an economic subject. If there is a human capital shaped hole left in the national body when an individual leaves, brain drain economics tries to estimate the size of the whole, how long it will exist, and what other entities might be affected by it. It is here that we might find the work that Watkins says is lost in just-in-time human capital. As I will argue, this work appears in brain drain economics as affective literacy work.

First, I will discuss how human capital externalities are understood, and then move on to their place in brain drain scholarship. In his 1988 article “The Mechanics of Economic Development,” Robert Lucas explains that what he calls the “external effects of human capital” are on quite a different footing from the idea of human capital generally, which has focused on the returns which accrue to the individual. He defines these external effects as having to do “with the influences people have on the productivity of others, so the scope of such effects must have to do with the ways various groups of people interact” (37). Lucas repeatedly calls the examination of external effects of human capital an inquiry into the social, claiming “human capital accumulation is a social activity, involving groups of people in a way that has no

counterpart in the accumulation of physical capital” (19). He explains that productivity cannot be measured by individual investment alone because there are group interactions that influence individual productivity. This we can see in everyday life. He writes:

“But we *know* from ordinary experience that there are group interactions that are central to individual productivity and that involve groups larger than the immediate family and smaller than the human race as a whole. Most of what we know we learn from other people. We pay tuition to a few of these teachers, either directly or indirectly by accepting lower pay so we can hang around them, but most of it we get for free, and often in ways that are mutual—without distinction between student and teacher. Certainly in our own profession, the benefits of colleagues from whom we hope to learn are tangible enough to lead us to spend a considerable fraction of our time fighting over who they shall be, and another fraction traveling to talk with those we wish we could have as colleagues but cannot. We know this kind of external effect is common to all the arts and sciences—the ‘creative professions.’ All of intellectual history is the history of such effects.” (38, original emphasis)

Lucas effectively argues here that everyday life reveals how people influence the productivity of others. Whatever the external effects of human capital are, they are meaningful enough for people to work to be around them. He argues that we even fight over the nature and quality of these externalities through who we flock to be around. Measuring productivity becomes more difficult, then, because it is not just about calculating the rise of income to the individual, but a kind of abstract sense of how people are drawn to each other and make each other better.

How does one measure this? Lucas makes a tentative suggestion by drawing on Jane Jacobs’ framework for understanding the economics of cities. As Lucas explains, Jacobs



describes a city's economy as including factors of production, such as land, people, and capital, but these factors of production are not enough to understand what holds a city together. It would be more rational, cheaper, if people took their capital outside a city where land is cheaper and they could increase profits. So what keeps cities together and prevents them from flying apart? Jacobs describes the economics of cities operating like the nucleus of an atom that is bound together by a strong force. Lucas explains that, "It seems to me that the 'force' we need to postulate to account for the central role of cities in economic life is of exactly the same character as the 'external human capital' I have postulated as a force to account for certain features of aggregative development [...] What can people be paying Manhattan or downtown Chicago rents *for*, if not for being near other people?" (original emphasis, 38-39). Ultimately Lucas suggests that economists can measure the external effects human capital—for him, how people make other people productive—by measuring how much people are willing to pay to be near each other.

A similar take on the externalities of human capital was written about a century earlier. In 1890, Alfred Marshall discussed the importance of "localized industries" because cost reductions occur when economic activities are located in one place. This happened because there is a benefit when people are near each other:

"When an industry has thus chosen a locality for itself, it is likely to stay there long: so great are the advantages which people following the same skilled trade get from near neighborhood to one another. The mysteries of the trade become no mysteries; but are, as it were, in the air, and children learn many of them unconsciously. Good work is rightly appreciated, inventions and improvements in machinery, in processes and the general organization of the business have their merits promptly discussed: if one man starts a new

idea, it is taken up by others and combined with suggestions of their own; and thus it becomes the source of further new ideas.” (225)

Both Lucas and Marshall indicate that skills and knowledge are transferred through social interaction—when people are around each other, they share information, and make each other more productive than they would be if they were alone. Significantly, there is also an abstract language that both use to describe the effects people have on each other. Lucas describes this as a “force” like a nucleus of an atom that keeps people and their capital from spreading apart despite the fact that being apart might be the more rational choice. Marshall discusses the “mysteries of the trade” that are “in the air” when people of the same mind are around each other, and these mysteries are even picked up by children unconsciously, ultimately leading to a reduction in costs for training. Both Lucas and Marshall point to something sensory that can’t be explained in the language of rational choice—the effects that bodies have on each other, a force that orients people toward each other. Here Lucas and Marshall share a similar vocabulary with affect theory, which I will discuss in more detail in the next section. But it is important to note that in these two significant works discussing the externalities of human capital, social relations are described as sensory and embodied, and as a result we could argue key components to the economic work of human capital are these affective social relations. As I will argue, harnessing the orientation of these social relations is a critical aspect of affective work.

It is no wonder then, that brain drain, which is about the movement of human capital, the extraction of human capital from one locale to another, is seen as detrimental to national economic development. This makes the question of “what exactly is lost when human capital moves?” a difficult one to answer. As Michael Clemens argues, this hasn’t quite been pinned down in the brain drain literature, and many economists are now doing work to show that the

benefits of brain drain, whether in the form of remittances or in potential for increasing the desire for education among “those left behind,” might outweigh the costs of brain drain. According to Clemens, early brain drain research in the 1960s and 70s started with the following assumptions:

“skilled workers make those around them more productive, provide important services, and are often publicly trained and paid. It follows that their removal from a country should harm economic growth and productivity, deprive stayers of services, and deplete public coffers by bidding up wages of skilled public servants and requiring public outlays to train their replacements.”(2)

It is the idea that skilled workers make those around them more productive, and their loss would harm productivity, that I will focus on because this is where literacy work will become visible.

The central inquiry in these early debates about brain drain, as Jagdish Bhagwati and Koichi Hamada explain, was if the individual economic agent really did affect other individuals—if the “drained person” would only “only take away the value of his marginal product which he himself earns anyway” then the loss could be replaced (19). But they argue that this is a limited way of thinking because if the social benefits exceed the personal benefits, as is the case “with doctors and exceptionally gifted academics about those whose emigration typically the underdeveloped countries seem to worry” then there will be “a loss to those left behind” (19). They argue that a consideration of the social effects of human capital migration should include: considerations of national income which would affect “The sense of security, bargaining power in trade and economic negotiations, the need for defense, and a number of political and economic variables” as well as the acknowledgement that a “sense of inadequacy” may develop in those left behind which would “stifle creative endeavor” (38). Here they claim, “Those who have lived in the less developed countries know that the emigration of skilled manpower in certain occupations, such

as scientific research in particular, creates a sense of inadequacy, which may stifle creative endeavor in domestic environment” (38). To compensate for these losses to sending countries’ economies, Bhagwati would later argue that sending countries should tax the income of skilled migrants. What Bhagwati and Hamada make clear is that when an individual leaves, the effects on “those left behind” extend to a perceived national well-being as well as into the psyche and productivity of the national body. While Lucas and Marshall imagined effects in locales where group interaction would take place, Bhagwati and Hamada open up an imagined national body that is affected when an individual leaves—a national body that feels insecure on the global stage, a national body whose creativity is stifled by their “sense of inadequacy.” The frequently used phrase “those left behind” also does the work of constituting the national body. It prompts us to imagine a cohesive group of individuals who would have been affected positively by the emigrant if the emigrant stayed. Again we might point to the sensory language to explain how people affect each other that Bhagwati and Hamada use here: “sense of security” of the national body when they must engage in trade and economic negotiations and “sense of inadequacy” felt left behind workers when those around them leave. Whatever the external effects of human capital are, this economic research I have reviewed suggests that they circulate in the affective realm.

This early research on brain drain reinforced what Lucas and Marshall argued about productivity—people make each other more productive, knowledge spreads through a kind of abstract transference that ultimately makes them feel better, more secure, more confident. Knowledge grows because of this. Whatever the external effects of human capital are exactly, they are meaningful enough for people to pay high rents to be around them and they are important enough that if lost, such as in the process of skilled migration, those who lose it feel

unsecure and inadequate about what they now no longer have. Here brain drain offers a way to attend to the critique Watkins has about human capital research because it allows us to see past the individual and look at how the individual was constituted by the effects people imagine from it. It is this possibility for brain drain that makes literacy visible in the human capital process because this work to constitute individuals is in fact affective literacy work. But, as I will illustrate next, the second wave of research in brain drain began to move away from this language of collectivity and sensory experience and back to the language of the individual. I will show that the Philippines in particular has a stake in this return to the narrative of the individual and discuss why the Philippines forwards the narrative of individuals making rational choices about migration rather than a national body negatively affected. But as Lucas argues, we can't ignore the external effects of human capital because we see them in ordinary experience and everyday interaction with people. This is a reality that comes out in migrant narratives and this is the realm where affective work becomes the work of human capital migration.

*“Produce and Produce”*

More recent studies of brain drain have focused on the brain drain/brain gain debate. Brain gain research, also called the “new brain drain” literature or “beneficial brain drain,” assumes that brain drain actually increases the expected return on education because it increases wages, and this will in turn cause others to invest in education. But not everyone whose educational investment is influenced by higher wages abroad will be able to emigrate, resulting in ultimately more human capital in the home country than if there were no brain drain. This could possibly result in a net brain gain. Other factors that may lead to brain gain are remittances, return migration, and the “diaspora effect” where members of the diaspora are still beneficial to the

country of origin whether through foreign investment or offering advice. But this is not always the case and depends on the sending country and a wide range of other factors. Studies such as McKenzie and Rapoport's research on rural Mexican youth, for example, show that migration has a negative effect on educational attainment on those left behind in the sending country. Their study found that living in a household with migration experience depresses the educational attainment of rural Mexican youth, with a stronger effect on 16-18 year olds who drop out of school after the period of compulsory schooling is over. They found that if the child is male, he is more likely to migrate himself following the footsteps of the migrated family member, and if the child is female, she is more likely to take up household work in the absence of the migrated family member. Regardless of whether migration has a negative effect on domestic educational attainment or a positive one, the focus of this particular strand of brain gain/drain research is on how the phenomenon of migration affects the decisions of people left behind and in particular their decisions to invest in education. In highlighting educational choice, this research brings us back to Becker and shifts the focus back to the individual investor making a rational choice. The external effects that Lucas envisioned became positioned back to the realm of the internal and into the realm of private choice. One person's individual choice affects another person's individual choice. The migrant's choice could still affect another person's productivity by either prompting them to invest more in education or invest less, but the notion that human capital included transference of anything besides choice—knowledge, feelings, appreciation, sensory experiences, for example—has been removed from this discussion. We can also see this clearly in Clemens policy paper arguing that policy makers need to be rid of the “pejorative term brain drain” and use “skill flow” instead. He argues that economists who want to restrict migration from developing countries are restricting development itself because “people develop, not

places” (freedom, income, health, and education are all possessed by people, he argues) and “the migration choice expresses freedom” (8). Like the brain focus on educational attainment in the drain/gain debate, Clemens shifts attention from the experience of place to the individual. Instead of Lucas’ analogy to the city, and Bhagwati and Hamada’s invocation of the national body, Clemens argues that what matters is the individual because only the individual can possess characteristics of development. If we assume migration brings negative effects and we restrict migration because of it, we restrict individual’s right to choose and possess those characteristics, and this brings us back to the individual laborer as entrepreneurial mini-capitalist where Schultz argued “by investing in themselves, people can enlarge the range of choice available to them” (3).

What’s behind this renewed focus to the individual? Why are we now more invested in the individual than ever before even though brain drain itself started with the premise that there was something beyond the individual that was worth measuring? I will argue that in the case of the Philippines, the answer seems to lie both in our perceptions of how the economy has changed and our perceptions of how the roles of literacy education and national citizenship have changed with it. First, the state of education has shifted dramatically—it is not just a public subsidized entity in which one invests time and forsakes only current earnings for future potential earnings. As Brandt reminded us, the pressures for acquiring literacy are only intensifying in the information age. Watkins argues that success through “beating the odds” has become cultural common sense and that higher education is now involved in a “heating up” process, where “vocational education went from cooling out expectations to heating up expectations” (*Class Degrees* 3) Both Brandt and Watkins focus on contemporary US education, but a similar phenomenon takes place in the Philippines with distinctly Filipino characteristics that I will

describe below. We also might recall the perceived “virtual nationhood” offered by Diamond—the left behind are not so left behind after all, he might argue. Looking at one person’s foreign wage might prompt me to invest in a particular degree or training in order to migrate abroad to receive that wage. This knowledge itself—how to examine the labor market, what’s in demand, and how to attain that occupation—is perhaps equivalent to the “mysteries” of occupational expertise that Marshall argued get circulated in the air. The “near neighborhood” has shifted to a globally expansive virtual neighborhood. This new research suggests that people can be more productive even if they are apart.

In the Philippines, individual choice becomes a mantra repeated by the Philippine government in response to complaints over brain drain. Like Clemens who argues to get rid of the pejorative term brain drain, government officials argue that brain drain does not describe the current moment. In a speech on Migrant Workers Day in 2002, former Philippine president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo argued that migration did not constitute a brain drain, because a brain drain meant that there would be negative externalities. But as Arroyo sees it, there are none:

“So when they say brain drain, I say, no, they are serving there but they are still serving here because they do not forget their families, their communities, and in this way our country also benefits. The important thing is when we see the skills that are in demand, our school system should produce and produce. If there is a big demand for nurses, produce more nurses; if there is a big demand for I.T. workers, produce more I.T. workers because we need them here and other countries need them. They’re an advantage there and they’re an advantage here, so produce more because there is an overall increase in demand. (cited in Lorente 194; translation by Lorente)



Arroyo likens the migration experience to a Becker-esque educational investment that stretched the field of choices across the globe. Schools as the means of investment should “produce and produce” more workers in all the fields where there is demand. And this is not brain drain because the individual serves both the employer and the families and communities at home, thus she argues there’s no negative externality because the loss will not be felt to the nation. But it is the individual who carries the burden for the new formulation—the individual is given even more responsibility for their investment because their choice should include a consideration of both private returns and social returns. Arroyo is arguing that these external effects should be made internal and that they exist under the umbrella of individual choice. When the individual takes on this double responsibility, “our country also benefits.”

Rodriguez offers us another example of a government official signaling the importance of choice. Speaking at a conference for the International Network of Filipinos Overseas, the official argued:

“Our best hope, during the [economic and political] crisis is export in the information technology industry. Forget about the brain drain. As much as we can, we need to beat the Indians, the Taiwanese, etc. Anyways, we could replace who leaves [overseas jobs].”

(qtd. in Rodriguez, *Migrants* 90)

When the official says, “Forget about the brain drain,” he is saying that the loss of human capital externalities is not the concern and recouping those externalities will not help the nation in its current “crisis.” The only way to overcome crisis is through exporting people. When he says, “anyways, we could replace who leaves” he is saying in effect that individuals can be replaced with more individuals—in other words, people have no effect on anything else beyond their own ability to compete. Importantly, the official put the Filipino in a field of competition with other

nationalities. And the belief that the Filipino was the exceptional individual—the special kind of individual in a pool of foreign labor that was less qualified, less invested in education, and less able to yield large returns than the Filipino—would come to characterize the justifications for sending Filipino migrants abroad. As I indicated in the introduction, Filipino people are seen as the country’s richest natural resource and they are marketed abroad as having what Guevarra calls “added export value”—particularly distinct Filipino characteristics that make them more valuable than other foreign workers (178). Oddly enough, what is “distinct” about Filipino workers is in fact their universality—their ability to meet any global demand.

### *Winning and Losing*

How is it that Filipinos and their literacy came to be embedded in a field of global competition? And why is the Filipino “The One” who is better, who has more literacy to offer, than all other global labor? This next section I will explain how the education system, defined by regulation and accreditation, on both the national and global level creates an atmosphere for competition at every turn—and it is this competition that fuels the brain drain economy. Unlike the Arroyo and the government official who say we should “forget the brain drain,” I argue that this renewed and intensified focus on the individual (who has now subsumed national well-being in her private investment calculations) acts as a marker for an important kind of national loss—the loss of the responsibility of the state for welfare to its citizens. Following Watkins’ framework for educational competition, I will argue that workers have no choice but to see every choice as fateful—as the thing that will bring them to the top of the “winner” pile. Widespread regulation and accreditation practices and the rising standards they bring with them make an educational experience for both teachers and students alike that is exhausting. The nation effectively transfers

the responsibility of state welfare to the migrant. In the next chapter I will show, drawing on migrant narratives, that this system for regulation and standardization increasingly makes affect management the primary work that teachers and students do to survive ever intensifying competition.

Education has been attached to the global migration process in the Philippines as early as the US colonial period. The Philippines' status as a US colony made Filipinos a convenient source of labor, as they were exempt from immigration restrictions. An American strategy of benevolent assimilation created the *pensionado* program that would prepare Filipino men from elite families for work in the government by training them in American universities. An American education system was another place where benevolent assimilation would take place. According to Rodriguez and Choy, both the *pensionado* program and American education system put the "American dream" in the mind of Filipinos and created a culture of migration that would be sustained through the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) in the 1940s and beyond. Choy argued that Americanized nurse training and the EVP laid the groundwork for Filipina migration to the United States, and Rodriguez argues that the colonial labor system, "including the introduction of training programs for overseas employment and the labor recruitment industry, would form the backbone for the contemporary migration apparatus" (*Migrants* 9). When the migration apparatus of the Philippine state was institutionalized through Presidential Decree 442 in 1974, it shifted the focus of labor migration to countries around the world. Though labor migration was meant to be a temporary strategy, the remittance dollars migrants sent back proved to be economically beneficial—they "helped to strengthen the country's foreign exchange reserves and thereby help the government to maintain its debt repayments" (Rodriguez, *Migrants* 12). Soon after the labor migration apparatus was institutionalized, education fell more

distinctly under state authority and subsumed under the state's transnational bureaucracy. Because "migrants' mobility is possible only if it is 'authorized'" (Rodriguez, *Migrants* 22), education institutions fulfilled the function of authorizing migrants' knowledge and skills, particularly when it came to certifying skill requirements for visa categories. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) served the function of certifying migrants skills at the mid-level skill set primarily for temporary migrants—I will discuss the role of TESDA and the policies of temporary migrants in more detail in Chapter Three. In this chapter I focus on how the state authorizes migrants through the regulation of higher education. This regulation simultaneously intensifies competition for professional workers.

The Philippine state has long positioned educational institutions into the field of global competition, as the state often compares itself to other developing countries in the region and looks to global standards to verify their authority and competitiveness. Therefore, situating education as global is both a way to make migration easier for workers but also a way to prove that the Philippines' status as "developing" is on its way to being "developed." Former Undersecretary of Education Mona Valisno, writing in the *Manila Times* in 2007, describes the situation this way:

"In as much as the World Competitiveness Study has indicated that the Asia-Pacific region will be the new driver of global economic growth, the Philippines is thus faced with the arduous, yet not entirely impossible, challenge of accelerating its growth, not only to keep pace with its neighbors in the region, but in preparation for a borderless world by the year 2015 when the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade and the World Trade Organization enables the full force of globalization [...] Now more than ever, there is a pressing need to greatly improve, uplift the standards and harmonize and synchronize

all levels of the Philippine education system from basic to higher education, if we are to compete very well and emerge as a winner when the sweeping winds of globalization envelop world economies and the only mode for survival and not be swept away is competitiveness.” (A6)

Thus Valisno dramatically puts the education system in the field of competition of a borderless world, but is still concerned with the national well-being. As she will go on to argue, the key to global competitiveness is the Filipino people. Valisno reports that Arroyo created a National Competitiveness Council that “has aptly zeroed in on the main critical resource that the Philippines has that will surely propel the country’s competitiveness—ITS PEOPLE.” Here Valisno indicates who exactly will carry the burden of changing the nation’s developing status into a competitive one. In this way Valisno does critical work in positioning the Filipino “against the odds” so that the Filipino might invest in education to beat the odds—it is an “arduous” challenge but not impossible. As Valisno and other government officials like her set the stage for competition at the global level, they must continue to intensify the competition. If the Philippines is to “emerge as a winner” and not be swept away by the “winds of globalization” and competitiveness, education must be regulated—harmonized and synchronized. At the national level, officials like Valisno were concerned with meeting global standards such as the World Bank’s report on the observance of standards and codes. For example, like a true educational investor, Valisno promises that the field of accountancy would yield big returns because

“Filipinos can now freely compete in the global playing field as evidenced by the Philippines’ inclusion in the World Trade Organizations’ policy of liberalization of services. As stated in SGV’s 2006 country report, ‘...many capable accountants and

auditors can produce corporate financial statements of internationally comparable standards.” (A7)

The importance of meeting international education standards as key to competing in the global marketplace can also be seen in the Arroyo’s Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010, where the state claims that “Workers are the country’s comparative advantage. There is a need to sustain this advantage by adopting education, training and technical/vocational programs that will make labor supply more elastic [...] For skills training to be of any use, standards for skills certification and assessment of competencies shall be developed based on international standards” (113). Thus Arroyo makes clear that the key to being competitive lies in educational institutions that also need to up their own competition in order to achieve success.

Higher education in the Philippines expanded to meet these perceived demands of the global market—following Arroyo’s directive, they produced and produced. The most well-known example of this is nursing education, where schools not only increased enrollments and added nursing courses to curricula, but new schools also opened up to take advantage of eager investors in nurse education (Masselink and Lee). The number of nursing schools increased rapidly—in 1970 there were 140 nursing schools and by 2006 there were 460 (Lorenzo et al.). According to Masselink and Lee, some nursing schools even established “second course” nursing programs so that physicians and other professionals could retrain as nurses. They argue, “these programs demonstrate the entrepreneurial agility of nursing schools—their ability to take advantage of what one interviewee described as a ‘policy faux pas’ that set clinical training standards but did not explicitly prohibit short course nursing training for physicians” (169). Masselink and Lee also observed that nursing schools would often establish commercial relationships with exam review centers and labor recruiters to make higher education institutions

a kind of one-stop shop for potential nurse migrants. This all caused Masselink and Lee to label educational institutions “migrant institutions” (167). But this expanding educational landscape—seventy percent of it in the private sector in 2012—only increased the need for regulation. For example, Masselink and Lee reported that the schools in their study that created second course programs had their programs suspended by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

At the school level, educational institutions were regulated by three different organizations and these regulators helped to create competition between different schools: CHED monitors the quality of higher education institutions, the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) determines competency of professionals through licensure exams, and private accreditation agencies like the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU), provides an optional bonus certification. As the educators in my study relayed to me, many schools sought the “PAASCU-certified” label for “prestige” and they were willing to pay the fees and do the extra paperwork to get it. Another label of prestige came from an “autonomous” status from CHED. Of the 1,856 higher education institutions in the country in 2012, sixty-three higher education institutions had “autonomy,” meaning they had a deregulated status in recognition of their meeting particular standards which included “Long tradition of integrity and untarnished reputation,” “commitment to excellence,” (a certain number of programs have to be accredited) and “sustainability and viability of operations” meaning the school is financially sound and the administrators have appropriate educational credentials (CHED Memorandum). Autonomous status also brought special privileges. Schools that were given autonomous status were exempted from regular CHED monitoring and evaluation, were given priority in grants distributed by CHED, were able to make autonomous decisions about the curriculum, and had the ability to establish satellite campuses.

With the rise in regulation, came the rise in competition as schools began to compete for the highest pass rates and the highest levels of certification. Educational institutions rushed to meet CHED and PAASCU standards. PRC began to release the names of those who passed the exam publicly as well as the numbers of those who passed in ratio to those who took the exam as a whole. The PRC also published a list of the “Performance of Schools” for each licensure exam, including numbers of first-time and repeating test takers, and an additional special list of the top ten test takers and their score (See Figure 1). These moves served both regulatory and “heating up” functions—they were a way for the government to keep tabs on poor performing schools and move to suspend them or close them, and they were also a way to keep students engaged in the labor of competition—as Watkins writes, “colleges and universities must emphasize the high degree of competitiveness involved in every choice” (100) so that “competition must appear everywhere and be made to seem the natural and normal state of affairs” (101). This can be seen in a common and well-known figure in Philippine higher education—the “topnotcher.” The topnotcher is a taker of a board licensure exam who achieved a top ten score, as made public through the PRC lists. Profiles of topnotchers frequent newspapers and schools and exam prep centers frequently publicize the topnotchers from their institutions. (See Figures 2 and 3). In these advertisements, a number indicating rank among test takers is usually presented along with a headshot of the topnotcher’s smiling face.

Thus, we can characterize the landscape of human capital production in the Philippines as one where an investment in individual education is equated to participation in a comparative playing field between schools and between individuals. Competition exists at various scales, making one’s individual investment more than a matter of their own individual return, but a return for the institution and the nation as well. Yet the individual as economic subject remains



the primary focus, because the system needs a “winner” to function. Without people doing the labor of establishing winner subjectivities—whether pursuing literacy themselves or creating lists of winning schools and people—the competition would fall apart. This competition is only accelerated by regulation, differentiated accreditation statuses, and licensure exam pass rates, which reminds the individual investor of competition at every turn. Competition must be seen as the normal state of affairs. When the stakes for competition are high, and an individual’s hierarchical rank is well-known, it is necessary for individuals to make “dominant emotional investments in the agency of the winner,” but this

“hyperindividualist agency appears as agency at all only to the extent it seems a visible origin of accelerated flow of effects standing out in stark contrast from the undifferentiated, static mass. Any contact across that divide might diminish the isolated visibility of the competitive winning position” (Watkins, *Class Degrees* 100).

In other words, to take up the winner position is an affective stance—and this affective stance is what fuels the constitution of individuality. The work of constituting a winner is the constant pursuit of individuality, distinctness, and exception. And, recalling Watkins’ invocation Marx, we know that this affective work to make the individual a participant in competition ultimately fuels the valorization of capital, not the valorization of the individual. Capital, Watkins argues, needs attention. I will argue that this attention consists of affective orientations and energies.

In *Literacy Work in the Reign of Human Capital*, Watkins extends the idea of the “winner” further by arguing for the “attention economy” as a useful framework for understanding how literacy acts as value-producing labor in the economy. The attention economy is more useful, he says, than the human capital framework which, as I have described earlier, he argues removes the labor of individual constitution. To support his notion of the

attention economy, Watkins draws on Michael Goldhaber's analogy of celebrity culture—the ultimate spectacle of attention—where stars have attention paid to them and fans pay attention to stars. Goldhaber emphasizes that this attention requires effort—here fans supply the labor in the attention economy and the work fans put into paying attention supplies the dynamics in the star system. Watkins argues, “An attention economy is as much about the constitution of attention workers as it is about the payoffs for trading in attention.” (102). Here attention flows reconstitute the “conditions of subjectivity.” He goes on to argue:

“Attention is always on the move, going somewhere else past the current focus. *Star/fan* then comes a way to identify a polarizing directional flow, without necessarily also assuming some intrinsic nature to either position that compels the flows to move in one direction and not the other. Attention flows create star power, not the other way around. Yet at the same time and equally important, the idea of star/fan dynamics registers a way of locating where subjectivities are forming in relation to the flow of attention” (102).

The primary take away that Watkins wants us to have from this discussion of the attention economy is that attention requires effort—because it is always on the move something must “compel” the flows to move in either the star direction (winner) or fan direction (everyone else). As he wrote about in *Class Degrees*, this subject position requires affective investment on the part of the winner. This helps us understand better why affect fuels a brain drain economy. If the key to development, as Arroyo and the government official argued, is producing more skilled workers who are deployed to help the nation in political economic crisis and keep the nation in active competition with other nations, then these skilled workers—“THE PEOPLE” as Valisno so identified them—must employ their affective energies to create “star power,” to create workers who could conceivably achieve all the nation asks them to do—workers whose

investments would yield returns not only for themselves, but for institutions, families, and nations dependent on their investment. This is the economic logic of *bagong bayani* the sacrificial national hero who keeps the economy afloat. And the *bagong bayani* is taking on more work than ever before.

In the midst of this discourse on individuals, winners and *bagong bayani*, brain drain still remains. As Rodriguez observes, it continues to plague discourse about migration. Unlike Watkins who wants to move past human capital into the attention economy, I don't want to lose brain drain and the conversation around human capital that it carries with it, because I think brain drain as a concept does important affective work. Brain drain is the anti-*bagong bayani*, but not in the sense that it indicates "nationalist betrayal" as Rodriguez indicated, but because brain drain identifies "the fans" and the "undifferentiated static mass" that is collateral damage to the "star" and the "winner." To draw on another one of Watkins' analogies, if we think of the action super hero movies that ask us to identify with the star character that beats the odds, brain drain asks us to identify with the hundreds of "extras hired to get killed in the first ten minutes or who remain invisibly working in the scene rooms offscreen" (*Class Degrees* 8). Brain drain brings us back to the "sense of inadequacy" first identified by Bhagwati and Hamada of "those left behind." It asks us to ponder the "force" and the "mysteries" that are shared between people and subsequently lost in wake of individual competition, when all the work goes not to sharing knowledge through social interaction but into each and every one person working to achieve winner status. The invisible behind the scenes labor of brain drain is the affective work to navigate these different subjective positionings particularly as they anchor one in a specific relationship to the nation state. As I will argue in the next chapter, this is the "skilled work" in brain drain, an economic structure that is so dependent of the categorizations between skilled and

unskilled, low-skilled and high-skilled. The actual work or the content of the work migrants are asked to do in the workplace becomes secondary, and even mechanical, compared to the affective work they have to do to maintain their subjective positions in relation to the state. The competition, the value of their labor, and the well-being of the nation all depend on it.

### *Chapter One Figures*

The performance of schools in the November 2014 Nurse Licensure Examination in alphabetical order as per R.A. 8981 otherwise known as PRC Modernization Act of 2000 Section 7(m) "To monitor the performance of schools in licensure examinations and publish the results thereof in a newspaper of national circulation" is as follows:

**NOVEMBER 2014 NURSE LICENSURE EXAMINATION**  
**PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER**

SEQ. NO.	SCHOOL	FIRST TIMERS					REPEATERS					OVERALL PERFORMANCE				
		PASSED	FAILED	COND	TOTAL	% PASSED	PASSED	FAILED	COND	TOTAL	% PASSED	PASSED	FAILED	COND	TOTAL	% PASSED
1	ABRA VALLEY COLLEGE	13	11	0	24	54.17%	3	23	0	26	11.54%	16	34	0	50	32.00%
2	ABUBAKAR COMPUTER LEARNING CENTER	0	4	0	4	0.00%	1	4	0	5	20.00%	1	8	0	9	11.11%
3	ADAMSON UNIVERSITY	4	0	0	4	100.00%	2	0	0	2	100.00%	6	0	0	6	100.00%
4	ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES	3	1	0	4	75.00%	8	4	0	12	66.67%	11	5	0	16	68.75%
5	AGO FOUNDATION COLLEGE	0	0	0	0	0.00%	2	8	0	10	20.00%	2	8	0	10	20.00%
6	AGO MEDICAL & EDUCATIONAL CENTER-BICOL CHRISTIAN COLL. OF MED	0	2	0	2	0.00%	10	38	1	49	20.41%	10	40	1	51	19.61%
7	AKLAN CATHOLIC COLLEGE-(FOR AKLAN COLLEGE)-KALIBO	6	0	0	6	100.00%	0	0	0	0	0.00%	6	0	0	6	100.00%
8	AKLAN POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE	15	2	0	17	88.24%	0	1	0	1	0.00%	15	3	0	18	83.33%
9	AKLAN STATE UNIVERSITY(AKLAN S.C.A.)-BANGA	32	5	0	37	86.49%	10	4	0	14	71.43%	42	9	0	51	82.35%
10	ALDERSGATE COLLEGE	1	3	0	4	25.00%	10	19	0	29	34.48%	11	22	0	33	33.33%
11	AMA COMPUTER COLLEGE-BAGUIO CITY	2	0	0	2	100.00%	5	4	0	9	55.56%	7	4	0	11	63.64%
12	AMA COMPUTER COLLEGE-MAKATI CITY	5	1	0	6	83.33%	2	0	0	2	100.00%	7	1	0	8	87.50%
13	AMA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE-EAST RIZAL	4	3	0	7	57.14%	3	7	0	10	30.00%	7	10	0	17	41.18%
14	AMANDO COPE COLLEGE	5	2	0	7	71.43%	6	6	0	12	50.00%	11	8	0	19	57.89%
15	ANDRES BONIFACIO COLLEGE	20	0	0	20	100.00%	0	1	0	1	0.00%	20	1	0	21	95.24%
16	ANGELES UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION	23	1	0	24	95.83%	11	4	0	15	73.33%	34	5	0	39	87.18%
17	AQUINAS UNIVERSITY	3	6	0	9	33.33%	43	43	0	86	50.00%	46	49	0	95	48.42%
18	ARAUULLO UNIVERSITY	1	0	0	1	100.00%	10	18	0	28	35.71%	11	18	0	29	37.93%
19	ARELLANO UNIVERSITY-MANILA	68	35	0	103	66.02%	104	96	0	200	52.00%	172	131	0	303	56.77%
20	ARELLANO UNIVERSITY-PASAY	25	16	0	41	60.98%	35	43	0	78	44.87%	60	59	0	119	50.42%
21	ARELLANO UNIVERSITY-PASIG	19	24	0	43	44.19%	20	12	0	32	62.50%	39	36	0	75	52.00%
22	ARRIESGADO COLLEGE FOUNDATION, INC.	8	8	0	16	50.00%	18	36	0	54	33.33%	26	44	0	70	37.14%
23	ASIA PACIFIC COLLEGE OF ADVANCED STUDIES	2	6	0	8	25.00%	6	23	0	29	20.69%	8	29	0	37	21.62%
24	ASIAN COLLEGE OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY-QC	0	1	0	1	0.00%	2	12	0	14	14.29%	2	13	0	15	13.33%
25	ASIAN COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY	21	4	0	25	84.00%	1	1	0	2	50.00%	22	5	0	27	81.48%

POS - 1

**Figure 1: Example of published listing of school pass rates. This figure shows the performance of schools for the November 2014 Nurse Licensure Examination.**

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CONGRATULATIONS!  
JAN 2014  
**LET TOPNOTCHERS**

**TOP 1**  
**DEIDRE MORALES**

**TOP 3**  
**ANGELA AGUSTIN**

**TOP 5**  
**VAN THADDEUS CARO CRUZ**

**TOP 6**  
**KATHLEEN LANTIN**

**TOP 7**  
**KAREN FERNANDEZ**

**TOP 7**  
**JANINE ABALOS**

**TOP 7**  
**MARITA DE LEON**

**TOP 10**  
**KEVIN ANGELO**

OUR FAMILY OF TOPNOTCHERS

COACHED, CHALLENGED, & CARED FOR AT MINDGYM

**LICENSURE EXAM FOR TEACHERS REVIEW 437 5880 MINDGYMPHILIPPINES.COM**

*Figure 2: Web advertisement featuring “topnotchers,” or top ten licensure exam scorers, for Mind Gym life-long learning center*

**UE Home of TOPNOTCHERS**

**UE College of Dentistry: No. 1**  
(100% Passing Percentage) among dental schools that fielded 50-99 examinees in the May-June 2009 and May-June 2010 Dentist Licensure Exam

**UERMMMCI College of Nursing: No. 3**  
among top performing schools in the June 2009 Nurse Licensure Exam

**UERMMMCI College of Medicine: No. 2**  
among top performing schools in the February 2009 and August 2009 Physician Licensure Exams

**UERMMMCI College of Physical Therapy: No. 5**  
among the top performing schools in the July 2010 PT Licensure Exams

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Figure 3: Web advertisement for “topnotchers” from the University of the East



## Chapter Two

### Affective Literacies and the Emotional Toll of Professionalization

In this chapter I build on the theoretical groundwork laid out in Chapter One to illustrate how affective literacy work functions in the lives of skills-based migrant workers. I first offer a framework for defining affective literacies drawing on the work of scholars in rhetoric and composition studies on the intellectual work of the body and heart, and then move to affect theory to relay the cognitive and intellectual work of emotions and the senses. As I discussed in Chapter One, the affective work in the brain drain comes in constituting the individual as human capital in the first place and, as I will explain in Chapter Four, it also comes in the effort to sustain the knowledge of human capital's external effects. In this chapter I draw on the narratives of two migrant professionals to illustrate that the system for regulation and competition upon which brain drain is supported creates the conditions for which affect management is the essential work that teachers and students engage in to survive daily life.

The work of writing studies scholars on emotion, affects, and embodiment provided for me the means to understand the emotional undercurrents underlying the work experiences of my participants. In researching forms of embodied work, Mike Rose and Catherine Prendergast argue that literacy researchers and educators need to embrace a more nuanced "multidimensional model of intelligence" (Rose 215) that takes into account an "ever-developing understanding of the complexity of learning" (Prendergast 5). This includes, they argue, the intellectual work of the body. Rose argues for a way of valuing labor practices that does not separate the work of the hand from the work of the brain, and Prendergast, researching literacies in a scientific research lab, calls us to reconsider the ways that our focus on writing eclipses the importance of embodied



practices critical to successful learning in the sciences including “manual dexterity necessary to conduct experiments, the ability to tolerate long hours of working both independently and with others, and the capacity to pursue projects over long periods of time” (3). These scholars remind us that the brain and the body are inseparable and interconnected in everyday practices of learning and labor. Similarly, Elisabeth Johnson and Lalitha Vasudevan, examining the “extradiscursive practices” of high school students, argue that critical literacy must go beyond “verbo- and logo-centric” definitions to recognize how texts and responses to texts are embodied and performed. They claim, “everyday texts invite affective responses that exceed logical, rational, verbal, and written responses” (34). Scholars of rhetoric have also questioned the division between emotion and reason and have argued that emotion can be traced in the subtexts of schooling, that emotion is a means of persuasion, and that emotion is an “analytical, performative and rhetorical act” (Micciche 2; see also Gross; Rice “The New”; Trainor; Worsham). In particular, scholars have used the term “affective literacies” to describe embodied and emotional responses to texts and spaces of learning (Amsler; Cole; and Rice, “Big Time”). I build on this history of scholarship that takes seriously the intellectual work of emotions and the cognitive work of the body. I’ve found in my research that migrants generate affective responses to text and that the discursive practices of the state seek affective resonance to do its work. But I also posit that affect management is itself literacy work.

Among scholars of affect, there are varying ways of describing the relationship of affect to attendant concepts like emotions, feelings, moods, sentiment and desires. Here, I follow Teresa Brennan’s framework that affect can be defined as the “physiological shift accompanying judgment.” In Brennan’s definition, affects are “material, physiological things” (6) that have some relation to cognition. Mazzarella describes affect as “shad[ing] over into feeling and as

such seems to point to a zone where emotion intersects with processes taking place at a more corporeal level. Affect carries tactile, sensuous, and perhaps involuntary connotations” (291). Affect scholars including Massumi, Ducey and Rice argue that there is an important distinction between affect and emotion, and claim that affect consists of preconscious intensities, and that emotions are the work of representing affects at the symbolic level, including language and narration. Describing the difference between emotion and affect, Massumi writes:

“An emotion is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized” (28).

While Massumi and other scholars of affect have traditionally held a sharp distinction between affect as sensory experience from symbolic mediation, William Mazzarella argues that sensory experiences and the symbolic mediations they become remain in constant dialectical relationship, making affect and language difficult to separate. As he argues, social projects “must speak both Massumi’s ‘languages’ concurrently: intensity as well as qualification, mimetic resonance as well as propositional possibility” (299). In other words, the work of affect is in fact the work of mediation. And affect highlights that mediation is not the final word, that mediation by its nature is unstable and temporary. It is for these reasons that I situate affect management as a literacy practice. As literacies are concerned with processes and practices of symbolic mediation as well as the politics of language and schooling, affect opens up an additional dimension to representation that links symbolic practices into a larger network of sensual corporeal life. Importantly, affects are not just individual, but emerge from a shared sense experience,

illustrating that, as Brennan reminds us, “there is no secure distinction between the ‘individual’ and the ‘environment’” (6). Affect is “both embodied and impersonal” (Mazzarella 292) and “presubjective without being presocial” (Mazzarella 291). This sense that affect is beyond the individual is what I believe connects affect management to literacy work.

Because affect is “presubjective without being presocial,” Mazzarella argues that “as such, it does not start with the bounded, intentional subject” (291). Here we will find that Mazzarella’s view of the potentials of affect aligns with what Watkins has argued about economic subjectivity—that an economic subject is made through the labor of the worker herself. Although Mazzarella does not call this “work,” he agrees with Watkins that “identification” requires some effort. Mazzarella emphasizes, however, that this labor always fails:

“The manner in which we are interpellated in our lives as citizens, consumers, and increasingly consumer-citizens, requires that we take these categories as affectively-imbued, compellingly flawed social facts. When we are thus addressed, when we are offered such identities, our identification always fails and that which we experience as our desire (a dialectical movement across the gap between affect and articulation) is always thwarted. But precisely this failure is the condition for our continued engagement.” (299)

Thus, Mazzarella reminds us that identity and the acts of mediation that do the work to constitute them are never complete—identification is always something we attempt to reach but never fulfill. Mediation is a “necessarily incomplete, unstable, and provisional” activity (302). What will become clear in the narratives of the professionals in this chapter is that while they have all attempted to achieve the winner position through massive investments in human capital, they

never reach it. They are always in the affective stance of perpetually looking upward. Mazzarella explains that this “gap [between affect and articulation] is a condition of power’s efficacy, if by efficacy we mean its capacity to harness our attention, our engagement, or desire” (299). Here Mazzarella helps us understand the work the “state” and “capital” do to “harness” our attention to always look upward and never look at the costs. This is the affective work and the emotional toll it takes to be a winner. To compete and to be a perpetual investor in human capital one is tasked with “the foundationless suspense, the perpetual anxiety, of life-long learning” (Liu 19). Not only do migrants carry this tremendous emotional burden, but they also find that identities in which the state attempts to fix them offer them what Melissa Gregg calls a “limited range of affective states and subjectivities permissible.” This is all despite the fact the state argues it is facilitating migrant choice when they are facilitating migration, not hindering choice.

As I will illustrate in this chapter and subsequent chapters, affect management is the means by which migrants practice critical literacy work when professionalized literacies and intellectually constraining workplaces offer little room for critical engagement. By critical literacy, I mean literacy that is used as a means of “self-authoring one’s place in the world” as well as used to convey or express a “particular way of being that belies, subverts, and exposes social norms and imbalances” (Hernandez-Zamora 9; Johnson and Vasudevan 36). While lower-order thinking demands only routine or mechanical application such as tasks of memorization, critical literacy contains higher-order thinking—knowledge transformation, interpretation, evaluation, analysis, and manipulation of information “to achieve a purpose or find possible answers in perplexing situations” (Lewis and Smith 136). I will argue that for Filipino migrants in the brain drain, practices involving the production, circulation, and management of affect looked more like higher-order thinking processes. In contrast, work that was deemed high skilled

by the state, such as language acquisition, professional certification, or communication training, was experienced more as tasks that required lower-order thinking. This is the case for workers considered low-skilled, such as the domestic workers that I discuss in Chapter Three, as well as those considered high-skilled workers, such as the professionals I discuss in this chapter.

Increased regulation and opportunities for professionalization for workers in the Philippines brought with them an increasingly intimate relation to work. As Schultz predicted, investment potentials abound so much that every part of life comes under the rubric of economic activity, and every opportunity could be “the one” thing that brings you to the top. As Gregg writes, “consciousness of the always-present potential for engaging with work is a new form of affective labor that must be constantly regulated” (3). Thus affective labor is not just in the “service with a smile” wage labor that Arlie Hochschild identifies among flight attendants or the immaterial labor that Michael Hardt claims is part of the laboring process and “directly productive of capital” (97). This is what ultimately makes affective *literacies* distinct from affective *labor*. While affective labor is produced and exchanged for wages in the moment, affective literacies signals that affective work is always searching for more opportunities to invest in a future *for* labor.

*Hope: “I Didn’t Even Connect with Nursing”*

As a Filipina migrant nurse in her late forties, Hope was a believer in human capital. She was what Schultz would identify as the exceptional capitalist, fully buying into the investment of the person. She was the rational investor that Becker imagined. She understood the labor market and could calculate the potential returns on an investment in education. She believed in the reliability in human capital—if one accumulates skills and knowledge, one will gain. In our interview, she

spoke about this from the many occupations that she held—she was educated as a nurse and came to the US with relative ease through the financial backing of her family living in Canada. Since then, she has worked as a Emergency Room nurse in the US, gained her masters degree in nursing, taught in a nursing program at a local community college, and opened a private recruitment company to help nurses in the Philippines prepare for the NCLEX, the American nurse licensure exam, and subsequently help find them jobs in the US. At the time of our interview she was the head administrator for a healthcare technical school and was working on her doctorate in business administration at a local university. It is clear that Hope was an expert in human capital accumulation and skilled in doing the work to constitute herself as a viable economic subject.

Hope immigrated to the US in 1987, and like any investor she realized that the timing of her investment made all the difference. According to Hope, there was a shortage of nurses in the US at that time and “it wasn’t very hard to come in [to the US] because all you really need[ed] to do [was] pass the state board exam.” But later, immigration to the US for nurses would slow down, a fact that Hope knew all too well as a former owner of a nursing recruitment agency. She successfully recruited three nurses to the US in the early 2000s and placed them in hospital positions before the immigration restrictions closed down the possibilities for Filipino nurses. Reflecting on her migration in light of the current migration possibilities, she said “so I feel myself, you know, I’ve been blessed that I’ve been able to graduate at the right time and be able to come here.”

Her decision to go into nursing was a purely financial one. She explained that her uncle in Canada funded her education, and that all her family members were already professionals in the US:

“My whole family [...] [my relatives] are all here. There’s actually eleven in the family and three of them are left at home. Eight of them are all here all over the US. So it becomes like a natural thing to want to be here because everyone is in the same pace. Everyone is either a nurse or a doctor. We are all professionals. At that time [...] unless you are a nurse or a doctor, you couldn’t leave the country.”

Hope described her decision to be a nurse as a “natural thing”—it became a normalized desire to want to come to the US, especially when everyone around her was already a professional. When she says, “everyone is in the same pace,” she shows that competition takes an intimate form. It seeps into everyday life and intimate family relations, echoing what economic sociologist Viviana Zelizer has argued about the co-existence of economics and intimacy: “intimacy and economic transactions [...] do not stand at two opposing corners like hostile pugilists. Instead, people constantly mingle their most intimate relations with economic activities” (167). In Hope’s experience, family relations became enveloped into the economics of brain drain.

As I have discussed, competition gives the appearance of more choices, but in reality takes away choice to make one subject position possible. Hope went on to say that “nursing was just the only viable thing to do at that time.” Hope’s response here echoes with the accounts of educators I interviewed in Central Luzon who believed that students went abroad when there was no other option. Rather than expand the possibilities for migrants, as Arroyo and the state claimed labor migration did, migrants experienced migration as the thing to do when there were no options available. Hope shows that there was really only one path and one “pace” available to her. It was this “pace”—this collective sense experience that she felt from the people around her—that pushed her to become a nurse. Here we can see affective literacy at work. Affective literacy appears as a kind of sensing what’s “in the air” as Brennan would say or walking into a

room and feeling “the atmosphere” and then orienting ones affect in the same direction. This also resonates with Marshall’s discussion of the “mysteries” of trade that become known when they are “in the air” and that make work more productive. Hope explained that when she chose nursing as a profession she “didn’t even have a clue,” and “didn’t even connect with nursing until 10 years later” when she was already a practicing nurse. If it wasn’t nursing that she connected with, it was the “pace” that resonated with her—the rhythm of competition pushing her upward—that became felt in the everyday moments of intimate life.

Hope often spoke as if she was taking up the voice of an entrepreneurial investor, a role she had to embody as a labor recruiter herself. She even listed off the statistics to describe the potential future for nursing, claiming: “But jobs are always there and especially now that the baby boomers are aging, and as you know, the projection, by 2030, thirty percent of the population will be sixty-five and older, there will always be an increase of need for nurses.” Here Hope voices the labor market reports disseminated by the Philippine government and labor recruiters. This was another added literacy—part of being able to constitute your identity as an economic subject meant knowing where on the landscape you could fit in. The investor doesn’t really have any agency at all, because the investor always has to read the market—the market really has the power. And nursing, Hope believed, was a practical investment that would always pay off. She repeated several times “there are always jobs for nurses” and explained, “we never run out of jobs. And we’re actually the one that says no to jobs because we’re just so tired.” In other words, there is always work to do. In revealing “we’re just so tired,” Hope provides a glimpse of the affective life of a perpetual investor in human capital. As Hope indicates, it includes unending opportunities to work, attesting to Gregg’s claim that “consciousness of the always-present potential for engaging with work is a new form of affective labor” (3). This



comes as a result, I believe, of human capital being presented as only a one-dimensional identity. When work is what you invest in and more work what you get out of it, leisure and work become the same activity. This becomes so much the case that Hope turns to more human capital investment in order to “cope” with her personal problems. Here Hope explains how she used her masters degree coursework in nursing to manage her affect:

“There was an opportunity to advance and it was right in the building where I used to work, and um, that was my way of coping. I was going through a divorce, and you know, I needed something to do to, you know, kind of make my mind busy and occupied so I went. And fortunately, each year I would say, I’m not doing this anymore, I’m not doing this anymore, and because it was so hard being a full-time working person, single mom, and then going to school, it was very hard to just go through. But each semester I would do that—I won’t do this anymore, I won’t do this—but then each semester I found myself actually registering for additional classes, and then at the end of four years I finished my masters.

Competition provides more opportunities at every turn because one could always be doing more to get to the top. As Watkins claims, “Winning [...] requires that every choice be made to seem a fateful, defining event” (100). When an opportunity appeared for Hope and it was right in front of her, she had to take it because it could be the fateful step. Hope was able to direct her affects from the personal stress in her life, her divorce, and orient them toward the work of acquiring human capital. Human capital was, after all, the rational stable entity she believed in and a sharp contrast from the unstable emotional world in her personal life. Gregg argues that for white-collar workers, “The work world offers a range of consolations when one’s private life may demand more effort and less reward than the clearly defined routine satisfactions of paid

pursuits” (5). This was the case for Hope who turned to schooling in almost a mechanical way—to keep her “mind busy and occupied.”

But what is peculiar about Hope’s account is that she doesn’t describe her actual achievements as something she earned through hard work, and she shifts her narrative from fateful choice (“so I went”) to some other force compelling her to keep going every semester—even though she tells herself that she’s going to stop taking courses. Why does she take away “the work” here, and attribute her educational achievement to some strange force, some “fortune” that kept her going when she no longer wanted to work? I believe the answer lies in the two conflicting types of individual subjectivities competition presents as ideal—hard worker who achieves against all odds and the anointed “one.” We are all hard workers, so what is it that distinguishes one person from another if its not some unique fate propelling one special person to the top? We receive a glimpse of this again later in my interview with Hope. I asked about her literacy history, including her experience with digital literacies like social media and she mentioned that what she really wanted was a Mark Zuckerberg type path to riches. (It should be noted that when I asked Hope about her “literacy,” as in writing in the traditional sense, she responded with her affective literacy.) Even after all her educational achievements, what she still hoped for was luck and for the dice to roll her way:

“Actually some days, I would actually think [about] what kind of nursing related discoveries, or things I could discover [...] There’s so many— you know this guy, I don’t think he expected that, that one day this would be the thing, he just kind of developed that for just fun purposes, I don’t think he had in mind that he would create those kind of millions for himself.”

This is not work, but chance, or perhaps affective work—believing in the possibility of luck, of things rolling your way and changing your economic position in a fundamental way. We look upward to these people who beat the odds, the one's who made millions on a whim, and believe we could do that too. In the end, the narrative of human capital as the way to achievement shows some cracks because Hope came to see that she would always be looking up, no matter what she achieved. Winner was a subject position she would always fail to fulfill.

When it was not Mark Zuckerberg she was comparing herself to, it was other American students around her. In the Filipino narrative of the “American dream” the “dreaming” part stops when one reaches America. Once there, a migrant worker has achieved all that family and nation had hoped for her. But this is an identity Hope repeatedly tries to take on but cannot fully inhabit. When she started taking doctoral coursework, she said that she had to start going to the writing center for help. She explained:

“I was always comparing myself to the people who were born and raised here, and I think that has become like a challenge to me. I was with thirty students who were born and raised here and then I was the only person who had English as a second language, so I was forced into really trying to excel. I tried so hard to kind of level with them, by basically working so hard. You know, I studied a lot, I read a lot, but then my writing skill was not good. So many times my professors told me that, look, you need to go to the writing lab.”

Hope explains that she never ended up going to the writing lab because of “time constraints,” a choice she always regrets. She explained, “Now I realized that if I went there, probably my writing skill would be better now, I mean, I can get by, I’m still getting mostly A’s in my grades.

But I feel like wow, if I can, if I had this skill, I would be so far in my career, or you know at least, I would be more comfortable with what I'm doing.”

Hope's narrative is familiar. A well-known part of the immigrant experience is the feeling that one will never quite fully be American. But what I believe is significant here for an understanding of affective literacies is the way she defines this moment as the fateful choice that could have changed things—she would be doing better, even though she is not doing bad, but if she had decided to invest in this particular skill—writing—she would “be more comfortable.” It is Hope's quest for comfort, some break from the work, that causes her to look back and wonder if that was the decision that would have placed her on top once and for all, ending the anxiety of the constant look for more. Watkins explains that literacy gains its value from the literacy work put into it. He contends, “if the value of literacy has gone up, that is because literacy labor is producing more value than before. In an attention economy, literacy exists at the nexus of work and value, throughout everyday practices” (102). Here Watkins identifies literacy labor as Marx's “socially necessary labor”—the labor necessary to produce the conditions of production. This helps us understand that the value of Hope's print literacy—her ability to write—becomes more valuable in this nostalgic remembering because of the affective literacy work she has already been pulled into doing by competition. This competition compels Hope to orient more affect toward the memory and gives it more affective resonance, illustrating what Sara Ahmed has said about the affective economies: Affect works just like capital—the more a sign circulates, the more affective it becomes. Hope's inability to write like a native English speaker was a literacy moment that picked up affective resonance as the economy of competition enforced the idea that Hope was still not at the top.

Hope offers us the picture of a Filipino migration success story. According to Choy, the Philippines has become the major source of foreign-trained nurses in the US, with at least 25,000 Filipino nurses arriving between 1966 and 1985. By 1989, Filipino nurses comprised an overwhelming majority of foreign nurse graduates in the US at seventy-three percent. In the government's view, Hope is a true *bagong bayani* and is living the American dream—not only did she migrate to the US during the nursing boom (a time that is referred to almost mythically in the Filipino imaginary and the ideal economic flow the Philippines would like to emulate again), but she continues to receive graduate education, attempted to open her own business, can pay back her family for their financing of her education, and can even conceive of leaving nursing to do what she really wants to do. By all accounts she would be a migrant success story. But in Hope's mind, she is still in the process of achieving, she has not yet achieved. The winner is an elusive position. Instead of being a winner, Hope experiences the affective life of “waste labor.” In Watkins formulation waste labor is the opposing subjectivity to “winner.” As Watkins explains, in contrast to the winner, which is all about conceiving yourself as distinct, exceptional, and distant from the rest, the affective position of waste labor is to be always in “virtually seamless contact” with the winner.

*Nina: Heating Up and Burning Out*

Nina had come from work when I met her for lunch in a restaurant in Pampanga. She had just finished giving a speech at a local high school about preparing for your career, including how to find resources, how to utilize guidance counselors for advice, and most importantly, how important it is to start thinking about your career now and taking responsibility for the future you want to have. Nina described her speech as a motivational talk about career readiness. Part of her

job as a guidance counselor was to doing this affective work of creating proper human capital subjects—preparing them for the work world where their human capital would pay off. So it was ironic to hear from Nina that she was about to leave her job as a guidance counselor the following week to immigrate to Canada. She would not be traveling through a work visa, though, but through her brother's sponsorship. Her individual efforts to build human capital would not bring her there; instead, she would be a fan to his star, the waste labor to his winning agency. Nina had spent the past three years looking for work in Singapore and was unsuccessful. Although Singapore was a destination country for 172,690 land-based new hires and rehires in 2012 (POEA) and the third most common destination country for Filipino migrant workers after Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates for the last two years (See Table 3), Nina could not get her human capital to cash in there. So at the time of our interview it seemed that she was trying to formulate a type of identity that was other than winner.

Unlike Hope, Nina's story is not one that would be described as a success story by the state. While Hope kept pushing to acquire more and more human capital, Nina felt burnt out, spread thin. If Hope's story was about the belief in human capital, Nina had given up this belief. She did not know what job she would have in Canada since it would not be likely that her counselor license would be recognized in there. Nor did she want it to. She was ready for a life that she would eventually describe to me as "lighter." She wasn't concerned about her credentials being recognized, but said she would be happy with "just a decent job." While global competition told her to keep pushing, keep looking up until she found her fateful place at the top, she decided to stop looking. In contrast to what she had just finished telling the students she spoke to in the high school gymnasium, Nina was now, for the first time in twenty years, unready in her career.

Nina had been working as a counselor since 1995 and like most of my participants, she had accidentally stumbled into her job without any intent or desire for the content knowledge. When describing how she came to be a guidance counselor she said, “it was not really a plan to be one. Perhaps I did not have any other work to do. And some people just encouraged me to try it on.” She majored in psychology and learned about research during college. She explained, “we were trained to do research, surveys, experimental research work, all the methods of research. So, my heart was into it really.” After college, she applied for a research assistant job in Manila, but did not get the job and also heard “discouraging comments” about living in Manila, so she decided “living in Manila is not my cup of tea.” She returned to her small province in Pampanga and started looking for jobs, but while waiting “had nothing to do.” From there, she found herself in counseling: “I don’t know how I got into this guidance and counseling masteral studies in a university here. Then it was there that I met a colleague who was also a counselor in that University, who encouraged me. He told me that there’s this counseling job in this private catholic institution that you might want to try.” She eventually got the job, but because she was not trained as an educational counselor, she continued to take courses while she worked every summer from 1995-1998 toward her masters degree in counseling.

Nina describes her career path as someone who is not looking back fatefully from a winning position. In each stage of her career, she was just trying to keep up. Her human capital story takes on a just-in-time character as Watkins described it, which emphasized, “human capital as a reserve [...] has been made obsolete. In a just-in-time system, human capital is individual power of action on the occasion, rather than the individual acquisition of a reserve that can be mobilized for any occasion” (61). Both just-in-time human capital and human capital as Nina experienced it were about the present moment as opposed to any vision of the future.

However, in contrast to the commons-based peer production workers that Watkins is describing in his work, just-in-time human capital took on a different meaning for Nina. While establishing her professional career path, the needs of the job demanded particular kinds of human capital that she had to adapt to meet. Her educational investment in the masters degree was to help her serve the needs of her job at the time—it was not an investment for something in the future. While the commons-based peer production workers had autonomous agency as their main goal, Nina never felt quite in control. She kept stumbling into opportunities and found it hard to keep up with their demands. Rather than a just-in-time human capital, hers was a “just trying to keep up with the current moment” kind of human capital. Her human capital would take on this same character as she attempted to find work in Singapore, but developed from “just trying to keep up” to “just missing out.”

Nina decided not to go through a recruiter, but find work in Singapore herself. She tried looking for jobs online first, and then took a trip to Singapore where a family member already working there helped her drop off her resume at schools. But she describes the process as “tough” because “in Singapore, during that time, they would not hire you for a job which you do not have any experience. If you have a limited experience in that field, of course there would be others who are more competitive.” In Nina’s description of her experience, public schools in Singapore did not want to hire foreign workers in administrative jobs or counseling jobs, and the schools that were willing to hire foreign workers expected high levels of past experience. She explained “but for counseling jobs, they’d rather have, especially for public schools, they would rather have their locals and permanent residents. Maybe because they believe that those people are more competent in the sense that they already are aware and have the feel already of the culture of Singapore. And I did try to apply in a public school [there]. But we were already told



that foreigners are not allowed really.” Nina’s experience shows that migrant workers attempting to find work were not only competing with fellow Filipinos for jobs, but other foreign workers and Singaporean citizens as well. Singapore’s workforce consisted of 1.2 million foreign workers in 2011 and over 1.3 million in 2013. This made up about thirty percent of the population in Singapore and thirty-seven percent of the total workforce (Singapore Ministry of Manpower). This was a sharp rise—in the 1980 only 7.4 percent of the workforce consisted of foreign workers (Yeoh and Lin). Foreign skilled workers, referred to as “foreign talent” and “talent capital” by the Singaporean government were considered resources that made Singapore more globally competitive. Yeoh and Lin report that in the 1990s, Singapore shifted its migration policy to recruit skilled work from “non-traditional source countries.” Before this shift, the majority of foreign workers were from the US, Europe, and Australia, but in the early 2000s the majority of skilled workers were from China and India. Media reports also began to indicate a hostile climate for Filipino skilled professionals in Singapore. Tessa Wong’s 2014 article “Unease in Singapore over Filipino workers” suggests that the stereotype of Filipino workers as maids in Singapore was becoming “outdated” as more Filipino foreign workers attempted to take on skilled jobs. Wong quotes sociologist Tan Ern Ser who claims that when Filipinos were only domestic workers they “posed less of a threat.” Now, “they may be perceived as competitors for jobs in sales, services, or professions that Singaporeans would take but preferably at higher wage levels, consistent with their aspirations.”

This all sets the stage for an additional social field of competition for Nina. Not only is competition in Filipino schools high as the government aims to make Filipinos competitive globally, but countries like Singapore provided an added battlefield for competition where foreign workers from different countries compete for jobs that Singaporeans also want for a

higher pay. Nina described trying to present herself as willing to adapt—to be more like a Singaporean resident if that’s what it took: “[The employer] acknowledged the receipt of the application but after that there was no more communication. And then again, I tried because after a few months, they again had this ad in the newspaper that they are looking for counselors, so I had to apply again, and then I wrote them a letter saying that I may not be a local or a [permanent resident], so I told them of my willingness to learn and to work with them, but then unfortunately I had no chance to work with them.” When Nina claims that Singaporean public schools preferred locals who “have the feel already of the culture” she points out the myth that human capital is just a stock of skills that can be applied in the same way everywhere, particularly when her experience suggested human capital was about just trying to keep up. When Nina’s general human capital and her existing stock of human capital resources didn’t work for her, she stressed flexibility and willingness to adapt—the skills necessary in a just-in-time system. But timing was never on her side. As Nina described it, she had “bad luck.” Nina describes several situations of bad-timing or back luck where things could have gone another way—just missing the Vice Principal of a school who could not meet her while she was in town, having trouble securing her employment pass.

It is after this period of failure, intense competition, and always just missing out that we can understand Nina’s new perspective on the work that she does. After trying to be a winner and failing, the affective resonances of her work life take on new meaning. Just as literacy work can raise the value of literacy—as in the case of Hope’s writing in the view of competition—literacy work can also decrease the value of literacy. This is the case in Nina’s increasing detachment and disengagement from her work. Her job as a guidance counselor was progressively stressful, as the guidance counseling profession was undergoing what Nina called a “paradigm shift” from

traditional guidance counseling work—where students would only see a counselor when they misbehaved—to a new strategy that sought to work holistically with all students to better their mental health and ultimately increase their human capital capacity. The guidance counseling profession was also working toward being a licensed profession by the PRC and was not licensed until 2008. Together these shifts resulted in more daily work for Nina as she had to meet students everyday for interviews, had the task of knowing their lives and their personal concerns, and even encouraged them to stop by her office during their morning break for snacks or during lunch. Her work also included regular class visits, conducting group guidance sessions, attending to students who were waiting for their parents to pick them up, regular meetings with teachers, academic counseling, and sponsoring activities for parents, including parent enrichment seminars. She also helped form a support group for children whose parents were working abroad.

In describing her hectic day-to-day activities, Nina explained that she and her colleagues often describe their work as *sabog*, which literally translates to eruption, explosion, scattered, or out of sorts:

“Because we offer a lot of services, information services, testing, individual help, we also keep a file of their records in the guidance office. And aside from counseling, follow-up placement. We do that sectioning also of the pupil, and then later on, we also did a follow-up survey with alumni. We also conduct, from time to time, correlational studies. So it was really challenging, and there would be times that you would find yourself burned out at times. Basically because of the varied, the various services.”

Nina explained that she would often look to the teachers in the school who she envied for having a structured workday. She said counselors did also try to plan a structured day, but “there will be concerns at times, you do incidental counseling also. And then, some parents or teachers would

come over or would give you a call. And then would ask for some advice or for a counseling session.”

As guidance counseling as a profession attempted to increasingly legitimize and prove the importance of the profession itself for the school system, more of the work that guidance counselors actually did became invisible and de-valued. As the paradigm shift in guidance counseling began to increase attention on students’ emotional lives to make them better human capital subjects, the demands for counselors increased without any acknowledgement of the added affective work that counselors would have to do to support the new paradigm. Nina’s job as a guidance counselor is to attend to human capital. Students would be better able to be proper human capital investors if they were also attended to emotionally. In the process of making students’ emotional work visible, Nina’s work as a subject of human capital herself became less visible. But by describing her work as *sabog*, Nina is attempting to make visible affective labor as high-skilled in her workplace. *Sabog* signals the material and bodily experience of emotional work—it relates to a notion of an eruption or blast. It means out of sorts, disoriented like after the effects of an explosion. This echoes what Gregg has argued about presence bleed. The expectation of constant availability that came with this paradigm shift made the boundaries between work and non-work hours disappear. Here the work of conducting research and counseling—the high-skilled work—became lumped under the same work as filing paperwork, distributing surveys. The high-skilled and low-skilled blurred together as a “to do” list of activities. But the affective work of dealing with this *sabog* was necessary to survive. It makes sense then that Nina would look to Singapore—the land of contingent work—as a place that was more secure than her own hometown. She looked to Singapore as a place of security and stability, a “change of environment” as she called it, because she felt no stability in her own

place of work. And the stability of guidance counseling as a profession, the paradigm shift that changed counseling from dealing with problems students to securing its place in the everyday life of schooling, left guidance counselors themselves feeling more unstable. Gregg writes that “precarious work involves living with constant uncertainty” (154). While precarity theorists normally refer to precarious work as temporary contingent work, Nina began to feel her permanent professional job as even more precarious than the contract work available in Singapore.

Nina’s narrative provides a different take on the affective life of human capital in the brain drain. While Hope’s story was all about choosing the right investment (nursing) at the right time (the nursing boom of the 80s-90s), Nina’s story is all about the wrong investment at the wrong time. Even at the beginning of her career, she was already a step behind, gaining her masters after gaining the job that required it. When she tried to find work in Singapore, a place that was welcoming of Filipino domestic labor but hostile toward Filipino professional labor and a place that was teeming with competition between foreign workers, Nina’s work life became a constant site of instability—as she described it, it was a game of catch up and just missing out on opportunities. This all set the stage for Nina to describe her work like *sabog* and her emotional state as burnout. Part of Nina’s affective literacy is the awareness to diagnose herself with a term that is well-known in organizational psychology. Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter write that burnout refers to stress experience “within a larger organization context of people’s relation to their work” (397). Burnout often is used to describe “extreme fatigue,” “overwhelming exhaustion,” “feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job,” “loss of idealism and passion for one’s job,” “sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment,” and is linked to “chronic interpersonal stressors” (399). Importantly, they point out that burnout is more than just being

tired—it includes disappointment (“ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment”), highlights the loss of something (passion and idealism), and includes the feeling of “depletion” of affect—removal of “one’s emotional and physical resources.” And burnout is not passive, but includes an active response. They write, “Exhaustion is not something that is simply experienced—rather it prompts actions to distance oneself emotionally and cognitively from one’s work” (403).

Burnout may be the opposite of engagement but it is active disengagement—to be exhausted is itself work. It requires the effort of active detachment and the strenuous reorientation of affects from passionate ideals to something else.

This discussion of burnout helps us to better understand the intense cognitive work of exhaustion. When Nina says she is experiencing burnout, she is making visible the labor of reorienting affective energy from competition and autonomous individuality to something somewhere else—an uncertainty which itself is exhausting to maintain. Burnout includes decision-making, keen awareness of the environment, and active judgment to disengage and distance from the stream of competition ever pulling her upward. When burnout dominates her work life, filing paper work, distributing surveys, writing reports and other forms of traditional literacy, lump together and become a blur of activity in relation to the distinct intensity of her affect management. Maslach et al. write that “Burnout is higher among people who have an external locus of control (attributing events and achievements to powerful others or to chance) rather than an internal locus of control (attributions to one’s own ability and effort)” (410). It is counterintuitive to believe that attributing one’s subjectivity to an outside force would be more exhausting than attributing it to one’s own effort. But here we are reminded of Mazzarella’s view that the affective work of subjectivity is a condition of the efficacy of power: “if by efficacy we mean its capacity to harness our attention, our engagement, or desire” (299). And this echoes

Brennan's reminder of the energetic dimensions of affect: "affects deplete when they are introjected, when one carries the affective burden of another" (6). When we submit our affective energies to the harnessing work of power, replicating its affects, behaviors, and desires, we do more work—we carry the affective burden of another.

It makes sense, then, that on the brink of her departure for Canada, Nina decided to opt out. She did not want to work as a guidance counselor in Canada. As she explains it, "From the certification that I have, I could opt to do a counseling job [in Canada] because there are non-regulated counseling jobs. But there are also regulated ones. So if I would have a regulated [position], I still have to go back to school." But she decided not to go back to school, ignoring all the directives to keep being competitive and keep gaining certifications. She said she would be okay with not being a counselor and would be satisfied with "even just day care assistant or teacher aide [...]. But even though if I won't have a counseling job first, its alright with me, as long as I have a decent job. Because I would like to try other things, perhaps lighter ones."

### *Conclusion*

This chapter explores the emotional effects of the focus on individuals, regulation, and competition described in Chapter One. Nina and Hope offer two different perspectives on the affective work of global migration. Both are professionals with graduate degrees, certifications, and years of working experience. They are by all accounts the high-skilled workers that citizens are so anxious to lose and the government so willing to send out. Their high levels of productivity are what make them valuable in both scenarios. But neither Hope nor Nina feel productive. Hope always feels that she is one step away from achievement and Nina feels the chronic stress of missing out and being spread thin. For both Hope and Nina, affective literacies

provide the possibilities for distance and detachment that made the competition, regulation and pressure of life in the brain drain bearable. Nina's cognitive action in burnout helped her disengage from the stress of her work life, and for Hope schooling was a way to keep her mind busy, when the pressures of personal life threaten to overwhelm her. Thus, Hope and Nina's narratives make visible the affective work of constituting human capital. As I discussed in the previous chapter, this is the literacy work that Watkins is concerned with making visible in human capital as a framework, and the case studies in this chapter show that to maintain the winner subjectivity necessary to make human capital function is exhausting work. For Hope, it is a never-ending struggle for more capital and for Nina it manifested as burnout

In her research on literacy in an age of rapid economic change, Brandt argued that literacy as a technology itself functioned to accelerate that change. She argued that this could be seen in the different literacy materials made present and then obsolete in people's lives. Hope and Nina were also experiencing literacy in the context of economic change, mobility, and competition, but their narratives reveal that literacy is not made meaningful through its physical materials alone. The competition in which literacy gains its meaning is felt in the senses, the body, and the mind. For Hope, competition is temporal. Hope chooses her profession to keep pace with those around her. Her print literacy and her missed opportunity at the writing lab only became meaningful in a larger story about the endless need for the pursuit of more credentials. For Nina, competition is physical, as she describes work as an explosion and burnout and feels the labor of disengagement. Their narratives suggest that migrant workers experience literacy in an era of competition, change, and mobility in a sensory way. Literacy is made meaningful because it can be felt in the everyday actions, energies, embodiments, and resonances that structure migrant life. In the next chapter, I will discuss in more detail these affective literacies



of “disaffection” and “disengagement” that allow migrants alternative rhetorical spaces to imagine alternative possibilities for their labor.

*Chapter Two Tables*

Number of Deployed Landbased Overseas Filipino Workers by Top Five Destinations (POEA)					
Destination	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>All Destinations Total</b>	974, 399	1,092,162	1,123,676	1,318,727	1,435,166
<b>1. Saudi Arabia</b>	275,933	291,419	293,049	316,736	330,040
<b>2. United Arab Emirates</b>	193,810	196,815	201,214	235,775	259,546
<b>3. Singapore</b>	41,678	54,421	70,251	146,613	172,690
<b>4. Hong Kong</b>	78,345	100,142	101,340	129,575	131,680
<b>5. Qatar</b>	84,342	89,290	87,813	100,530	104,622

*Table 3: Number of Deployed Landbased Overseas Filipino Workers by Top Ten Destinations, New Hires and Rehires, 2008-2012; information compiled from POEA.*

## Chapter Three

### Affective Attachments: The Transfer of Care in Temporary Migration

Do not argue with your employer. Do not talk to other maids. Do not show a temper or long face when scolded by your employer. Contact your agency whenever you have problems and don't rely on your friends.

—Code of discipline in a household service worker training (Brygo)

Any social project that is not imposed through force alone must be affective in order to be effective.

—Mazzarella (299)

One of the most controversial and widely critiqued skills training programs in the Philippines has been the Supermaid program—a program implemented in 2006 that was meant to “upgrade” the skills of domestic workers in order to make them “more than maids,” by training them in first-aid, emergency evacuation procedures, and communication skills. Augusto Syjuco, then head of TESDA, the government agency that facilitated the Supermaid program claimed of those who took the program: “They are not just maids. They are really very well trained now. If there is someone injured among the family they work for ... how to get out of a fire in a high-rise building, all these are part of our upgrading program” (Javellana-Santos). He promised that the training program would allow Filipino migrants’ to transcend the boundaries typically placed on domestic workers, providing them both higher pay and pride in their work. An advertisement of the Supermaid program, printed in the *Manila Bulletin* newspaper when the Supermaid program was announced, tells the story of Mary Joy Buñol, a Supermaid graduate who once lived in a “far-flung” province and now, after taking the Supermaid course, “works for a royal household in Malaysia” (see Figure 4). She is said to have transcended her humble beginnings to find a life working intimately with the global elite. The ad shows her flying atop a group of nameless women who wear generic maids uniforms, while she has been digitally rendered to wear a

superhero costume. Next to her is then-President Arroyo, also wearing a superhero costume.<sup>3</sup>

The Supermaid program is just one of the skills training programs that the Philippine government has developed within the last thirty years to support the mass numbers of temporary contract workers who leave the country annually. Many of these programs are made especially for female care workers who are seen as the country's most vulnerable deployed workers.

In this chapter, I explore how the Philippine state uses literacy education to facilitate the movement of temporary, contract-bound, migrant care workers. I focus on how government training initiatives like the Supermaid program are marketed as programs of professionalization and neutral skills training. Building on the framework for affective literacies I have established in Chapter Two, in this chapter I illustrate how temporary migrant workers experience these training programs as teaching affect management. As the Hope and Nina's stories illustrated in the previous chapter, affect management becomes the high-skill work that both drives the competition in the brain drain and is necessary to survive it. In this chapter, temporary care workers experience affect management less as a sense of competition, and more as an encouragement to see the "dirty work" of care and cleaning as heroic work. It is clear in the Supermaid advertisement that as much as these programs promise some kind of neutral transferable skill to achieve professionalization, these programs rely on affect management for their success. In other words, migrants must buy into the hero story and understand their literacy acquisition as a practice of national heroism. Migrants must look up at the individual hero who "beat the odds" instead of looking across at the similarly skilled and equally educated "pool of waste labor"—the nameless women below Buñol—perpetually hoping and waiting for their own opportunity to beat the odds (Watkins). But, as the first quote in the epigraph shows, the actual

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<sup>3</sup> See Cruz and Guevarra for more on the Supermaid advertisement as figuring the female worker and racial branding.

everyday activities that are part of being a national hero include affective disciplining. As I have illustrated in Chapter One, the Philippine state has used literacy education historically as a way to prompt migrant workers to look up at heroic possibilities and take their own individual responsibility for the rights and protections that the state, in its role as temp agency nation, cannot offer abroad. This is even more accelerated for temporary contract workers whose contracts are more tenuous, conditions more unsecure, and whose bodies are more vulnerable.

In this chapter I draw on government documents and secondary texts as well as interviews with temporary migrant care workers and those who facilitate their movement to examine their literacy experiences prior to departure and in their foreign workplace. In their own experiences as Filipina care workers both on the job and in the process of securing employment, my informants revealed that practices of affect management became integral to their survival, requiring critical literacy and higher-order thinking. In contrast skills meant to “professionalize” their work, such as language acquisition, communication training, and technical training, were experienced as rote and mechanical and looked more like lower-order thinking. I explain that as care labor practices have become more professionalized and standardized with growing government intervention in the last two decades, temporary care work also became more constrained in the types of affective states permissible in the workplace. Importantly, this reversal of the high-low skill categorization reframes literacy practices in a context that goes beyond the individual classroom or workplace. Instead, government documents and migrant responses indicated that literacy indexes an affective relationship between migrant workers and the Philippine state. Continuing to use affect as a framework, I suggest that we understand the transnational movement of literacy as taking place through a continuous series of affective attachments and detachments between the state and worker citizen. As I will illustrate, affective

literacies do not move in the same way that literacy scholars understand literacy-as-texts to move or in the same way that migration scholars imagine the movement of literacy education in “brain drain” research. While literacy-as-texts circulate through institutions, networks, or linkages (Dingo; Queen; Vieira, “Undocumented”), and brain drain considers literacy as a possession that can be carried from point A to point B, resulting in the loss of human capital from one country and the gain of human capital in another, I claim that the transnational movement of affective literacies—literacies as they are performed and experienced through the body—take place through affective attachments and detachments from the nation-state. State educational projects like the Supermaid program are one means by which the Philippine state creates emotional and legal ties with its workers, thus strengthening the role of state authority in the migration process.

*Transnational Attachments: Affective Literacies and the Nation-State*

In this section, I provide an overview of the growth of literacy education by way of mandatory vocational training for female care workers in the mid-90s and early 2000s. In this discussion, I examine three trends in migrant education that signal the contact and collision that characterizes the affective relationship between the Philippines and its migrant citizens: first, the state’s use of education to diminish “care drain,” second, the state’s move to be an agent of caring feelings, and third the state’s attempt to train care workers in a professionalized and standardized form of care work. As I have argued, this professionalized training curriculum was experienced by migrants as rote and mechanical. But that does not mean migrants were not intellectually engaged in higher-order thinking tasks. The politics of care and protection that surrounded these standardized trainings point to an affective landscape where migrants did their critical work. It is

on this affective landscape that migrants engaged in knowledge transformation and critical thinking activities that included negotiating an ongoing relationship with the state.

Care labor is perhaps the most prominent migratory stream departing from the Philippines in the last twenty years, and as the Center for Migration Advocacy reports, a growing percentage of Filipino migrant labor is female. A discourse of anxiety began to circulate around the loss of maternal care from families and the resemblance of this labor flow to trajectories of human trafficking when female labor grew in larger numbers and began to regularly outpace male labor in the mid-90s. Fifty-five percent of the labor migrants in 2010 were female and these migrants have been historically relegated to the service sector and other forms of “women’s work” such as teaching, housekeeping, care giving and nursing. In 2010, the largest number of deployed land-based workers were household service workers. Totalling more than 94,000 workers, ninety-eight percent of these household service workers were women. Cleaners, nurses, care givers, and housekeepers (referring to hospitality) made up other common occupations for women (Center for Migrant Advocacy). In order to deflect the anxiety surrounding the flow of female care workers out of the country, the state created mandatory training programs for those seeking employment in vulnerable occupations (Cruz; Rodriguez, *Migrants*). The Supermaid program is just one of several government-facilitated training programs and policies to come out of this emotional response to a growing vulnerable female workforce. (See Table 4). Importantly, the program was announced during the same national press conference that addressed the Philippine government’s difficulty in evacuating over 30,000 migrant workers from Lebanon during the 2006 Lebanon War<sup>4</sup>. The Supermaid program was presented as a means to give repatriated migrants a pathway to other work opportunities, and in particular opportunities that

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<sup>4</sup> For more on the evacuation of Filipino migrant workers during the 2006 Lebanon War, see Balana and Avendaño, Docena, and Uy.

would place them in the “higher-end” of domestic work that was believed to lessen the risk of violence and abuse. At the time of this press conference, stories circulated in the local media about two Filipina maids who jumped out of the windows of the high-rise apartments where they worked when their employers refused their evacuation. In order to erase the image of abused bodies plummeting downward to death, the government redirected affects toward an alternative image—that of a hero-worker like Buñol whose skilled body can rise upward above trauma.

*Care Drain: A “More Hidden and Wrenching Trend”*

Scholars from the social sciences have characterized this flow of care labor as “care drain.” Established in the work of Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, care drain refers to the movement of Third World women who must leave their own families and homes to care for the families and homes of First World women. While First World women attempt to have it all, they argue, by entering into a male-dominated career world while maintaining a family, Third World women must leave it all behind in order to attain higher wages abroad. As Ehrenreich and Hochschild describe it, Third World women are also seen as being inherently caring and able to do this kind of “women’s work” because they are seen as coming from traditional families. They claim that as First World Women acquire masculine qualities, Third World Women are increasingly feminized. They explain, “Third World migrant women achieve their success only by assuming the cast-off domestic roles of middle- and high-income women in the First World—roles that have been previously rejected, of course, by men. And their ‘commute’ entails a cost we have yet to fully comprehend” (3). They claim that this shift to care work as primarily the work of Third World women contributes to a growing global division of labor.

While Ehrenreich and Hochschild separate brain drain from care drain, they explain that care drain operates from the same economic logic as brain drain. Care drain is described by Hochschild as “the importation of care and love from poor countries to rich ones” (17) and she calls it a “parallel but more hidden and wrenching trend” than brain drain. Ehrenreich and Hochschild use the language and logic of brain drain economics to articulate the structure of care drain. They equate care to a precious natural resource that is extracted for rich First World countries. In describing how First World countries extract care from the Third World, alongside natural resources and industrial labor, Ehrenreich and Hochschild write “Nannies [...] bring the distant families that employ them real maternal affection, no doubt enhanced by the heartbreaking absence of their own children in the poor countries they leave behind” (4). And care drain operates through dynamics of push and pull rationality. Later they claim, “The ‘care deficit’ that has emerged in the wealthier countries as women enter the workforce pulls migrants from the Third World and postcommunist nations; poverty pushes them” (7). Thus, Ehrenreich and Hochschild present care as an object or resource—a possession or kind of property that can be quantified. When care leaves one country, it depletes from a national stock of care and adds to another national stock of care. But my research suggests that the migration of care workers and the mobility of affects is much messier than the “model of hydraulics”<sup>5</sup> Ehrenreich and Hochschild present.

The term care drain is not just in academic scholarship—it has been picked up by government agencies in the Philippines and integrated into their programs. In the 2011 Annual Report of the Overseas Workers Welfare Association (OWWA), “care drain” is described as one of the organizations “priority thrusts.” One of the items in the annual letter of OWWA from administrator Carmelita S. Dimzon was to “Strengthen the capacity of OFW Help Desks and

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<sup>5</sup> I am grateful to Martin Manalansan for this term.



OFW Family Circles nationwide and address the phenomenon of care drain” (4). Richard, an administrator at OWWA, explained to me in an interview that the association attempted to alleviate the affects of care drain on the family left behind by helping to maintain communication between workers abroad and their families at home in the Family Circles program. He said

“when the mother or father leaves their family behind, some sort of vacuum happens in the family [...] So we try through our Family Circles [program] to strengthen the family, so that even though the father is gone, communication, is maintained between the OFW and their family, and at the same time strengthen their family so that they can take care of each other while the other family member is there.”

Richard reinforces here the idea that care drain is the depletion of care, and the only way to reverse this depletion is to provide channels through which care can flow back the country, but communication.

As productive as the term “care drain” and its surrounding discourses have been in garnering attention to the vulnerable work conditions and important kinship relations of migrant women, I argue that this scholarship promotes a limited understanding of the “emotional labor,” (to use Hochschild’s now well-known term) of care work. By distinguishing care drain as a parallel and separate stream of brain drain, it contributes in furthering the division of workers between those who are seen as skilled in cognitive function, and those who are not, and are hence more vulnerable. This division separates the economics of human capital from the moral imperatives of welfare-state protection. One is an ethical issue concerning welfare and justice. The other is one of economic value. Furthermore, the separation of care drain from brain drain overlooks an important element of care—it is intellectual work. A by-product of this binary between work of the brain and work of the heart has been the invisibility of care as intellectual

work and the erasure of care workers' educational and professional histories as well as their literacy experiences. This is similar to what Rose has written about the division of hand and brain in descriptions of manual labor in the U.S.: "It is though in our cultural iconography we are given the muscled arm, sleeve rolled tight against the biceps, but no thought bright behind the eye, no image that links hand and brain" (xv). By separating the emotional woes of workers from the intellectual constraints on their work, care workers remain feminized figures of pity that, as Manalansan has pointed out, reinforce traditional notions of female domesticity. In care drain, there is no "thought bright" in the figuring of these pitied women.

Affect theory provides an alternative framework to describe the labor of Filipino care workers. When scholars of female domestic labor claim there is a care drain, they assume that care is something one has or can possess. Ahmed, however, argues "emotions are not simply something 'I' or 'we' have. Rather it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made. The 'I' and 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of contact with others" (10). In Ahmed's framework, it is not that emotions are transferred from point A to point B. Rather, emotions create the very surfaces and boundaries that allow point A and point B to be delineated. It follows, then, there is not so much a drain of care, but relations and impressions, movements and attachments, that shape how we define care, who cares, and who or what we care for. It is this relational dynamic that I use to explain the "transfer of care," of Filipino care workers in the following section. Viewing Filipino care workers labor through the lens of affect illustrates that what makes Filipino care workers move is not the transport of care from one country to another, but a dynamic back and forth relationship between the state and its workers citizens.

*The Transfer of Care: “From the Heart and into Their Hearts”*

The Lebanon evacuation not only reminded Filipino citizens about the vulnerability of domestic workers abroad, but it also highlighted a glaring contradiction in government rhetoric—If Filipino migrant workers are heroes, then why do they need to be rescued? To deflect attention from appalling working conditions and a migration infrastructure that allowed such conditions, the state began to position itself more strongly as a caring body and in contrast, the worker as a rational and skilled body. To say that the nation “cares” means seeing the nation “both as a subject of feeling” and also “generates the nation as the object of ‘our feeling’”—we feel cared for by the nation, we care for the nation (Ahmed 13). To present itself as a subject of feeling, the state claims that it offers migrants protection “from the heart.” The most effusive example of these caring feelings can be seen in the 2011 Annual Report from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the government agency that facilitates and manages transnational labor migration. The newly appointed POEA Administrator Carlos S. Cao Jr. promised to “bring the heart of God” into the overseas employment program and declared that in administering the overseas migration program, what matters most is not “migration expertise and vaunted experiences of many years” but “dealing with [migrant workers] from the heart and into their hearts’ through various acts of kindness both small and big, while serving their needs” (5). While knowledge was presented as the means for migrants to rise above trauma, for the state, it was emotion that mattered, not knowledge. Cao further explained that the administration’s efforts to reform migration policy are physical and emotional. The administration, he argues, “actively participated in putting teeth, flesh and muscle, as well as heart and soul” into the implementation of Republic Act 10022 (RA 10022), a recent piece of migration policy that claimed to bolster protections for migrants. Rather than imagine the state as a rational and

mechanical bureaucratic entity, Cao positions the state as a vulnerable working body. Just as migrants experienced the pain of labor, the state also felt pain in doing work on their behalf. Similarly, Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baloz, Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment claimed that the workers welfare organization (OWWA) is:

tasked primarily to protect the rights and promote the welfare of its OFW-members and their families [...] OWWA [...] has to innovate, implement well its programs, and deliver quality services not only to sustain its members, but also to send the message across the broad global community of OFWs that the OWWA is serious in taking good care of them.” (1)

As Dimpalis-Baloz’s statement makes clear, these programs were meant to send a message—workers were encouraged to understand the formation of government programs and services as acts of caring by the government.

This caring often came in the form of skills training. The Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995, or Republic Act 8042 (RA 8042), put the mantra of skills as protection in place. Section 2(g) of RA 8042 established, “The State recognizes that the ultimate protection to all migrant workers is skills. Pursuant to this and as soon as practicable, the government shall deploy and/or allow the deployment of only skilled Filipino workers.” Just as the Supermaid program was a response to tragedy surrounding female care workers, RA 8042 was signed into law just a few months after the execution of Flor Contemplacion, a Filipino maid working in Singapore who had been accused of killing another Filipina domestic worker and the child under her care. Many Filipino citizens believed that the Philippine government should have intervened, as evidence surfaced that indicated Contemplacion’s innocence. When the government did not intervene, the public was outraged. Filipino scholars suggest that the public outcry over

Contemplacion's death forced the state to address the issues of migrants' rights and protections head on. As Rodriguez explains, "RA 8042 signaled a new kind of relationship between the Philippines and its migrant citizens" ("Migrant Heroes" 342). In 2010, RA 8042 was amended and replaced with RA10022, which was broadly understood as a policy that increased the state's regulatory functions in all areas, including the dissemination of skills. The amended Section 2(g) of RA10022 presented a slightly different function for skills and emphasized the government's role in skills training. The revised statement reads: "The state recognizes that the *most effective tool for empowerment is the possession of skills* by migrant workers. *The government shall provide them free and accessible skills development and enhancement programs.* Pursuant to this and as soon as practicable, the government shall deploy and/or allow the deployment only of skilled Filipino workers" (emphasis added). This new law codified the already ongoing practice of government-sponsored skills training, making clear that it was the state as a welfare state and caring body that was providing the means for migrant workers' empowerment. The slight gradation in the function of skills as "the ultimate protection" to "the most effective tool for empowerment" is telling—to be protected and to be empowered are not the same thing. Using skills as protection implied a defensive position; only vulnerable people need protection. But empowerment was the proactive responsibility of the strong individual to possess. The notion that skills are a tool for empowerment is echoed in the OWWA's 2011 Annual Report, which explains its education and training programs by tying welfare and protection to skills acquisition as empowerment:

"As an institution tasked to protect and promote the welfare and well-being of OFWs and their families, the OWWA promotes education and training as a potent tool to empower OFWs and their dependents. To equip them with knowledge and skills is equivalent to

molding them into becoming self-reliant, productive and employable members of society.” (9)

OWWA’s role then in protection is to “mold” workers to be independent and self-reliant. Through these policies for implementing vocational training, the state became a caring body, eschewing its image as rational unfeeling body. In response the migrant care worker became less like a caring and vulnerable body and more a rational, skilled, and empowered body. What I am attempting to illustrate here is that this responsive back-and-forth dynamic points to a different framework for understanding how migrant workers become mobile bodies. Unlike the “transfer of care” of the “care drain” narrative proposed by migration scholars, this transfer of care did not only move from one country to another, but care moved through the collision and contact between the state and its worker citizens. Care workers were able to move not by the possession of care but by affecting and being affected by the state.

*Care Training: “You Have to Be Patient and Work From the Heart”*

Just a few months after the Lebanon evacuation, the POEA issued a series of memorandum circulars regulating the training of domestic workers that became known as the Household Service Worker Reform Package of 2006. The Reform Package, which the POEA claimed to “professionalize and minimize the vulnerabilities” of Household Service workers, made government assessment and skills training mandatory for household service workers by including a minimum age requirement of twenty-three as well as requiring completion of a National Certificate II (NCII) course, which established basic competencies for household service work, and a Language and Culture Familiarization training, which taught basic language and cultural practices of specific destination countries, including training in Arabic, Hebrew,

Italian, Mandarin, Cantonese, and English (PIDS). Changing the title of the occupation from domestic workers to “Household Service Worker” was the first step in professionalizing this kind of care work and in the NCII course, domestic workers were referred to as “household managers.” In 2009, the Language and Culture training curriculum was made part of a larger four-six day Comprehensive Pre-departure Education Program for migrant household service workers, which would include basic life support and first aid training as well as a stress management course (ILO). We can see here that the Philippine government attempted to intervene in the skills regime by shifting its “unskilled” workers into a slightly more skilled category through professionalized training. But this professionalism was taught more through affective disciplining than through knowledge creation. I will examine two training programs closely here: the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar, which is mandatory for all workers and the NCII Skills Certification Course.

#### *Making Informed Workers: Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar*

Pre-departure orientation seminars (referred to as PDOS) have been offered by the government since 1983 and became a compulsory requirement with the issuance of Memorandum Circular No. 3, Series 1983. The PDOS were based on the principle that information is power and that access to accurate information is a “precondition to safe migration” (Anchustegui 1; ILO). An OWWA brochure promoting the program presents the Taglish tagline “*PDOS, Ako’y Informed Worker*” (PDOS, I am an informed worker). (See Figure 5). Pre-departure training was offered informally by NGOs as early as the 1970s in response to requests for information by migrant workers and their families, but became institutionalized by the government in the 1983, and was meant to be offered two weeks before migrant departure. When the PDOS became

institutionalized, the government and industry associations conducted the orientations. The responsibility for PDOS was brought under the umbrella of OWWA in 2003 (Baggio and Taguinod). OWWA also serves as an accreditor for “PDOS Providers” that include NGOs, recruitment agencies, and other private organizations who are authorized to conduct PDOS according to the guidelines outlined in Memorandum of Instruction, No. 13 Series 2003 (MOI No. 13). Therefore migrants experience a wide-range of settings during PDOS training—their orientation may be conducted by a nun or may include a slick video with accompanying advertisements for banking institutions or insurance companies.<sup>6</sup> MOI No. 13 restricted the PDOS only to cover the difficulties experienced by workers during the first six-months at overseas jobsites. In 2009, the PDOS Advisory No. 5 and No. 6 clarified that NGOs are authorized to conduct orientations for household service workers and overseas performing artists; recruitment agencies could conduct orientations for land-based workers in technical, professional and skilled categories; and land-based industry associations could conduct orientations for professional, skilled, and technical workers only of their member agencies. This advisory also required that each PDOS be targeted to address the particular of working in the specific receiving country. For workers who are not household service workers, the seminar contains is a mandatory one-day, course lasting more than six-hours. Seminars in some cases are catered toward specific occupations. The seminars consist of the following modules: migration realities (including codes of conduct and challenges to working overseas); a profile of the destination country (including laws and customs that are different from the Philippines); the employment contract (including what is standard in legal certified contracts), health and safety, financial literacy, and other travel trips such as what to do at the airport and who to contact for information abroad.

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<sup>6</sup> Pre-departure training for immigrants is conducted by the Commission of Filipinos Overseas.



Richard, the OWWA administrator I interviewed, reported that OWWA went through a lengthy and thorough process in deciding what information to include in the trainings. They consult with welfare officers who work in OWWA locations abroad, as well as NGOs and recruitment agencies who are intimately familiar with migrant needs. They also interview overseas workers in different occupations. Richard explained that the previous year the association conducted a workshop to evaluate the pre-departure seminar, which included group discussions with sea-based, land-based, and household service worker groups. In addition, more workshops are conducted with labor attaches and welfare officers abroad, and more NGOs and recruitment agencies to get feedback on seminars. After these interviews, discussions, and workshops, Richard explains, “We gather [the data] and try to evaluate PDOS through that. What we come up with, we usually present to these groups again for confirmation. And then after that we do that those [workshops again]. So basically we get more or less a more accurate information about what’s needed and what’s not needed.” Despite this lengthy preparation process to determine the content of the seminars, Richard said that it is still difficult to get workers to listen and engage in the seminar:

“Of course the main problem with PDOS is that basically it is being conducted about two to three weeks before they go for abroad. So workers they have the tendency not to listen that intently to what is being discussed because they are usually thinking that ‘we are about to leave our family, what will happen to me when I go there.’ Right? So we try to make PDOS as interesting as possible and as short as possible. So that we only give them to most needed information before they leave for abroad.

In their research on the impact of the HSW Reform Package, Battistella and Asis conducted a comprehensive survey to determine just what migrants were learning from these trainings. They

found that these mandatory trainings did not increase the knowledge and understanding of government regulations and that the competency and language requirements were widely criticized as being income-generating programs for the government rather than adding any valuable knowledge. Anchustegui found similar results in her study of the accreditation of PDOS providers, where she argued that “the PDOS is still primarily perceived as compliance with government regulation and not as a mechanism that is capable of facilitating the success of [Overseas Filipino Workers].” While Battistella and Asis recommend that the migrant education program be reinforced with improving information campaigns, I would suggest that the issue isn’t that migrants are not learning, but that they are understanding these programs as part of their ongoing contentious relationship to the state. In other words, the meaning they find in this work is not in the memorization of procedures, but how their work as a caregiver or domestic worker positions them in a particular relationship to the state and in a particular kind of trajectory abroad. In the trainings, it is not content per se that is taught but a kind of unfeeling, rational, professional disposition promoted by the curriculum of the state. As Richard tells us, migrants aren’t even paying attention to the content of the PDOS, but are more concerned with anxiety of leaving and preparations for their move. It makes little sense for the state to depend on neutral unfeeling information sessions, or to think of migrants as “informed workers,” when to promote migrant work abroad and to workers domestically they hold up the affectively-laden hero image. “Information” holds little value for workers who are concerned with their daily survival.

#### *Skills Certifications: National Certificate II Courses*

The state’s brand of professionalism were also taught in National Certificate II (NCII) courses which are run by the TESDA. TESDA is in charge of technical education and “middle-level”

skilled workers. The National Certificates are given for levels I-IV through the Philippine TVET Qualification and Certification System, run by TESDA. For the NC II course, required for household service workers, the qualifications assessed are “Performs prescribed range of functions involving known routines and procedures; Has limited choice and complexity of functions; has little accountability.” In contrast, the National Certificate III includes “Performs wide range of skills; works with complexity and choices; Contributes to problem solving and work processes; Shows responsibility for self and others” (TESDA, “Philippine TVET”).

As Beatriz Lorente explains, the language and communication tasks taught in the NCII courses were those that required the simple transfer of information, including “filling out forms and recording information” (198). Lorente writes that the assessment criteria suggests, “the communication skills that are considered to be valuable are ‘passive;’ they are not about constructing or questioning knowledge or procedures” (199). According to the standard curriculum for the Household Service Worker NCII course, competencies achieved in the course include: Participating in workplace communication; working in a team environment; practicing career professionalism; and maintaining effective relationships with clients/customers. In the Workplace Communication module, some of the competencies covered included parts of speech, sentence construction, effective communication, communicating with the employer, technical writing, and recording information. When assessing communication performance, trainers ensure that: “Specific relevant information is accessed from *appropriate sources*; [...] Appropriate *medium* is used to transfer information and ideas; Appropriate non-verbal communication is used; Appropriate lines of communication with superiors and colleagues are identified and followed; [...] Personal interaction is carried out clearly and concisely” (TESDA, original emphasis). As is evident in the curriculum, language skills and communication goals are talked

about in the same language as business interactions such as teamwork, processing requests, and setting up work plans. Thus, this curriculum re-frames the home that migrants would be working in into a place of business. The home is not seen as an intimate space where care takes place, but one of standardization, measurement, and distance. By setting up the domestic workplace in this way, the migrant body is disciplined to be unfeeling and rational as well.

However, scholars of domestic work have explained that what distinguishes domestic workers from other service workers is the intimacy of their relationship to their employers—they are employed directly by the families they serve and often share living space with them, at times perhaps sleeping in their child’s bedroom. They are intimate with the dirt and the bodies, as well as the dynamics and dysfunctions of the family. As close to domestic workers are to family dynamics, being “one of the family” also makes them susceptible to abuses like overwork and unpaid back wages. While standardized communication practices made up the formal and official curriculum of the classroom, affect management made up, what education scholars might call the hidden curriculum (Trainor). According to government officials, the minimum age requirement of twenty-three was meant to ensure that domestic workers were emotionally “mature” before going abroad. They hoped that this age requirement would reduce cases of homesickness and reduce the costs of repatriation. The Language and Culture Familiarization training was described as equipping overseas workers with basic knowledge in the language and culture of the receiving country “to ensure a harmonious relationship with the foreign employer and better job performance, hence [helping] them cope with the new working environment” (Samante). These affective discourses trickled down to the labor recruiters who were involved in matching migrants with foreign employers. Omar, the owner of a labor recruitment agency that sends household service workers to Bahrain, told me in an interview that when he hires agents

whose job it is to recruit workers from surrounding provinces, his criteria was that “they must have a background in psychology,” not business or marketing. The most important part of the recruitment agent’s job, he explained, was ensuring that workers were emotionally prepared to work overseas, since it is labor recruitment agencies who often bear the costs of repatriating workers who do not fulfill their contracts. Most often, Omar said, he tried not to hire women who had already worked in professional occupations, because it was difficult for them to do the menial tasks of household work without complaint. He said, “we screen applicants properly” so that they do not “create a problem” once they are abroad. Thus, these state entities and state partners understood that it was not certified content knowledge that would make a migrant mobile, but one’s ability to manage affect in the work place.

#### *Affective Literacies in Temporary Care Work*

In order to illustrate what higher-order thinking tasks looked like in this affective landscape, I detail the workplace experiences of Maria, a former Filipina domestic worker who worked in Hong Kong and Singapore between 1992 and 1999, and Luz, a teacher who has lived in the Philippines all her life and taught elementary school home economics in the same province since 1983. Luz was preparing to go abroad for the first time to Israel and at the time of our interviews gone through training, found a recruitment agency, and had been interviewed by an interested employer. She was only waiting for her work visa. Maria worked during the period of time when the government had been conducting pre-departure trainings for over a decade, but was just beginning to identify the need for female care worker protection. She can thus give us insight into how migrants experienced these initial forms of standardization and the affect management that came along with it. Luz, in contrast began training in 2012, during a time when the

standardization and professionalization requirements had become much more elaborate, and the same time much more common place and understood. I see in Maria and Luz's actions two primary moves that show her affect management and reveal processes of higher-order thinking—first, both Luz and Maria practice, what Manalansan has called “disaffection” or the channeling of affects while outwardly appearing “unmoved.” Maria also describes a thinking process that mirrors what Brennan calls “discernment,” a process that includes considering the history of her emotions, where they come from, and how they connect to the feelings of others. Because Maria has been removed from overseas domestic labor for thirteen years, she takes on a more reflexive perspective. Both disaffection and discernment include knowledge transformation, the combination of new and existing information to evaluate situations and solve problems as well as self-authoring practices that position one in the world or that offer critical stances toward existing structures and ways of being. I will argue that Maria's claim that she is just a maid is a way of holding the state accountable, of creating a history of her literacy's gains and losses, and of tracing her literacy's transnational attachments. In the end, I suggest that Maria is offering an alternative affective re-reading of *matiyaga* (patience) that provides her a separate rhetorical space of possibility to manage her relationship with the state.

*Luz: “I Am Not Wasting”*

The “emotioned rules” (Trainor) of professionalized training can be seen in migrant accounts. Luz, a fifty-one year-old married mother of three, completed a one-month certificate course in 2012 for caregivers going to Israel that included caregiving techniques and Hebrew language instruction. Before taking this course, she had worked since 1983 as an elementary school teacher and was, at the time of my interview with her, waiting for her work visa to go to Israel.

Her children are currently in college, and her husband was sixty-three and retired. In her words, she is the one who had to “suffer the expenses” of the family. Manalansan claims that in the 1990s, Palestinians were prevented legally and physically to access jobs and services in Israel. This resulted in an influx of Filipinos, South Asians, and other foreign workers who “arrived to replace sequestered and ostracized Palestinian labor” (“Servicing” 218) thus enabling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rodriguez explains that in a 1999 labor market report, Israel was classified as an “emerging market” for Filipino domestic workers, and in 2004, the same was said for Asian financial centers such as Hong Kong because of the “increased labor force participation rate of women” and “preference of young Chinese families and expatriates for Filipino domestic helpers” (*Migrants* 57). In 2010, the most recent available statistics state that there were 4,941 OFWs deployed to Israel. As she was detailing for me the process of migration, which included conducting an English interview with her future employer, she emphasized one thing her employer said to her: “I want to see you soon.” Luz laughed a little when she mentioned this to me, perhaps because of the irony of the comment. The greeting was one you would give a friend or family member, a person who you knew intimately.

In our interview, she detailed for me the various skills she learned in her training: “how to take care of a baby, how to change a diaper, how to give them a bath, how to give an elderly person medicine.” Despite having children of her own that she raised and caring for her elderly parents before their deaths, she said that the trainings were “very difficult” and emphasized that memorization was the main skill she used. During testing, a demonstration was put on by a trainer, and after this demonstration she had to follow and memorize the procedures. One by one those in the class had to go in a room and then perform the tasks as three trainers watched intently for mistakes. When I asked Luz what skills she thought were needed to be a caregiver

based on the trainings she received, she said, simply, “Follow the rules. Oh yes, just to follow the rules and regulations. Just like that.” It was not content knowledge, but the disciplined ability to mechanically repeat gestures, discourses and dispositions that were necessary. It was not care, but unfeeling professionalism that mattered. Luz later explained that the thing that qualified her for the job and made her appealing to employers was not her skills training but her “old age,” explaining “Israelis like the old age. Like me. Because [older workers] are very *matiyaga* (patient).” Luz illustrates here the underlying lessons learned from the curriculum: this professionalism was essential precisely because employers expected and wanted a worker who would not be quick to show emotions.

In his article on the Supermaid program, Julien Brygo describes meeting an instructor for the program who claimed, “Many employers are looking for domestic workers who are polite, respectful, patient and quiet. Here we try to get them used to the excitable temperament of Hong Kong employers. You have to be patient and work from the heart.” While employers have an “excitable temperament,” care workers must respond with the appearance of no temperament. We can see that while professionalization was promoted as the skill that would empower heroic workers, these tasks were experienced as lower order thinking—as Luz put it, pure memorization. In the experience of workers and recruiters in the migration processes, the more valuable, critical, and higher-order skills were those that played out in the affective landscape.

When I asked Luz if she thought she was overqualified for work as a caregiver, she explained that she already has many years of experience in care work—she cares for her grandfather-in-law up until now, she cared for her mother and father in their elder years. When asked if she was wasting any skills in becoming a caregiver because she was already a professional, she said bluntly “no, I’m not wasting” and when asked if she would rather be a



teacher in Israel, she said “no, there are no teachers in Israel,” not even entertaining the idea. I asked her several times in several different ways if she would like to continue a career teaching abroad, and she responded “just caregiver.” Rodriguez writes persuasively about the need to understand the gendered and racialized logics involved in these training programs—that women are suited for this kind of care work, and the training programs coincide with racialized immigration policies that restrict foreign workers to “3D jobs” (dirty, dangerous, difficult) while they may favor foreign workers who exhibit positive attributes that are considered more Westernized, civilized, and desirable as English-speakers. Often these trainings attempt “to ready poor women for employment in more affluent households overseas by teaching them the basics in household appliance operation [...] They are also given cooking instructions on local cuisine. The training administrator for a caregiver course believed that part of her task was to discipline doctors to ‘live in humility’ in order to prepare them to work in lower-status jobs as caregivers” (*Migrants* 38). Yet, while it is important to emphasize the reality of the racialized and gendered body that is a part of performing workplace tasks, I don’t want to ignore Luz’s sentiment that she did not see her move to work as a wasting of her skills.

During my interview with Luz, many of the questions I asked coming from perspectives of rational economics did not resonate with her perspective on the meaning of her labor migration. She didn’t use cliché responses to explain the migration of women as domestic helpers that I often heard throughout my interviews—that Filipinos are known throughout the world as being hard-workers, intelligent, compassionate, and able to adapt to any culture. Neither economic theories of human capital and skill waste or capitalist critiques of exploited labor resonated for Luz. She didn’t see her career trajectory as an accumulation of skills wasted as she moved from a teacher in the Philippines to a caregiver in Israel. In addition, she did not see

herself as a victim to larger social forces. Watkins' theory of waste labor can only help us understand partially Luz's perspective. If hyperindividualism creates a byproduct of waste labor that leaves a pool of equally overskilled workers, Luz recognized that she was not any different from other skilled workers. Therefore, she would not be wasting anything. To her, this was not a demotion, but a continuation of a life where she has always been in the pool of overskilled work, never part of the winners. I like to think that Luz's articulation that she was "not wasting" was also her attempt to disengage emotionally from this game of winners and losers that Watkins describes.

Instead, Luz chooses what Manalansan calls "disaffection." He claims, "disaffection can be seen as blockage or emotional impasse, it also involves a form of strategic emotional flow combined with self possession that is part of quotidian survival and an economy of affect." Luz is choosing disaffection on several levels—disaffection in the game of winners and losers that articulates her work as waste labor and disaffection from the language of upward and downward mobility. It might seem odd that someone employed for care work would use disaffection. However, in Luz's laugh at her future employers greeting of "I'll see you soon" there is also a sense of disaffection. Work for her doesn't carry that emotional attachment. In fact, what made her qualified for care work was her very ability to disengage, her ability to endure hard circumstances in her old age—*matiyaga*.

*Disaffection: "That's Why My Employer Loves Me"*

When I met with Maria, she had just come from a long day of teaching math to fourth, fifth, and sixth graders. She took an hour-long jeepney ride from a neighboring province on an afternoon where the heat and humidity felt even more oppressive than usual. But instead of being

exhausted she spoke quickly, with intensity and passion, not at all halted by speaking in English (a task which caused many of my participants to speak with hesitancy). During our interview, I learned that Maria graduated college with a degree in civil engineering and worked initially as a field engineer in construction in Manila. But after a few years, and after getting married, she and her husband decided that she should study to be a teacher in order to get a job in the small town in which they both grew up. Maria spent the next year taking twenty-one units of education courses, but failed her first attempt at the teaching licensure exam. Finding work in the province proved difficult, so she eventually decided to work abroad as a domestic worker. Maria, like Luz and like many of the participants in my study, had more education than what was required for her job, and would be considered by economists as part of a transnational flow of labor called “brain waste”—a subset of brain drain. She worked in Singapore for two years and then spent the remainder of her time abroad in Hong Kong where there was a higher salary and better working conditions. She stayed there until she left the Philippines through the Balik-Turo<sup>7</sup> program, a short-lived government program in the late 1990s that offered domestic workers in Hong Kong an opportunity to return to the Philippines with guaranteed jobs as teachers. The program was presented as a strategy to reverse brain drain.

Maria explained to me that in Hong Kong she worked for a family that included one young daughter, who was attending international school, and her parents. She often helped the daughter with homework, which included both English and Cantonese reading and writing tasks. When her employers were busy, which often was the case, Maria explained that she would “give the child lessons.” Because the child’s international curriculum was partly in English, Maria

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<sup>7</sup> A program called Balik-Turo exists now as part of the Exchange Visitor Program between the Philippines and US. It has different purposes than the 1990s iteration of Balik-Turo—it brings back nurses and teachers from abroad to teach seminars in the Philippines, and in exchange, participants can take advantage of a No Objections Statement track in J1 visa applications.

could assist her with homework, but when assignments were in Cantonese, Maria would ask the daughter to translate in Cantonese for her so that she could help. Maria explained:

I told her, okay, you translate in English and then you translate in [Cantonese] so that I can help you, because if you talk to me in [Cantonese] I just only understand, but I cannot talk, cannot speak [in Cantonese]. So that time, the daughter told me, “okay *Tita* (Auntie), the English is like this.” So I [helped] her in English and she wrote like that.

Then at that time, the daughter became excellent in school.

This glimpse of Maria’s work life illustrates that Maria performed what are considered professional activities, including literacy tasks like teaching, translation, and tutoring<sup>8</sup>. Maria’s knowledge of teaching—how to guide the child step-by-step through the assignment and how to overcome their gaps in knowledge and language to complete the task—makes this labor possible. We can also see that the labor is affective as the daughter uses the affectionate term “Tita” meaning aunt or auntie, to address Maria. And Maria feels perhaps what she is not supposed to feel—pride over her work as the daughter became “excellent in school.” These skills, texts, languages and affects blur together in her multidimensional practice of labor. However, these literacy tasks had little economic value for her as she hid her education as a teacher from her employer and did not tell the parents about the lessons she was conducting with the child. Maria explained that there was no need to reveal this to her employer because her job was to be a maid, or DH as she refers to it here (short for domestic helper). She explained that the mother didn’t learn she had training in education until the daughter started to excel in her schoolwork. Here Maria describes what happened when the mother learned she was a teacher:

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<sup>8</sup> Labor recruiters would often market this skill of domestic workers who had professional educations—“a maid and tutor at the same time” was something they used to promote the “added value” of Filipino workers who were the “Mercedes Benz” of the world’s domestic workers (Guevarra, *Supermaids*138).

And then [the mother] learned I am a teacher. “Why did you not tell me?” [she said].

Why should I? Because there is no relevance. I am your DH. What, are you going to change something if I tell you that I am a teacher? I am your DH, so there’s no need. So I did not tell her, but that’s why she learned that I am a teacher.

Maria explained, and brought up several times in the interview, that one of the important skills of being a DH in Hong Kong was not talking back to your employer and no longer thinking of yourself as a professional when you work as a DH. She even referred to herself as a “maid” since she believed that “domestic helper” and “nanny” were euphemisms that were “nice to hear.”

Maria described her mentality this way:

“I’m a maid there [...] if you are a maid, do not tell yourself that ‘I am a professional.’

You are a professional in the Philippines, but you are a maid here. I know I’m a DH so I did my work well. Because I am a DH, I will not put in my mind, oh you are a professional so you can answer back to your employer. So that’s why my employer loves me. Because I do my job very well.”

As Maria explains it, her job was to manage her emotions—to not answer back to employer and to not consider herself in equal status to her employer. Her “work” was to do this remembering, to remind herself that she was a maid. This is how she “did [her] work well.” She explained that this was a strategy she was taught in her training program before she was deployed, where she received lessons on “how to be a good DH”: “If your boss is angry, don’t answer back” and “eliminate your envy” of other Filipinos who have secured additional part-time work.

The decision to understand her job as just a maid and not a professional is in direct contrast to what government programs like the Supermaid program promoted. Augusto Syjuco, then head of the government agency that facilitated the Supermaid program said the program

would make maids more than maids: “They are not just maids. They are really very well trained now. If there is someone injured among the family they work for ... how to get out of a fire in a high-rise building, all these are part of our upgrading program” (Javellana-Santos). He promised that the program would allow Filipino migrants’ to transcend the boundaries typically placed on domestic workers, providing them both higher pay and pride in their work. But Maria realizes that to think of her professionalized literacy abilities as a kind of capital did not do much for her in Hong Kong and certainly did not allow her to transcend the limitations of her position. When she decides not to tell her employer of her training as a teacher, she understands that her literacy practices were embedded in an affective economy that valued her emotional performance over her professionalized skill set. In fact, she considered her literacy history as a trained teacher and engineer as potentially damaging since it might direct her emotionally to feel pride and cause her to be tempted to think of herself as more than a maid. This reminder of how she is defined by the state and by her foreign employer provides the direction for her to re-channel her pride and delay her anger. This practice of affective management mirrors what Manalansan has labeled disaffection: “an affective orientation that inclines toward a managed, if not studied refusal to unleash or display emotional states publicly” and a “strategic emotional flow combined with self-possession” (217). While outwardly, Maria appeared “unmoved” (Manalansan) by the employer’s question, inwardly Maria was affected, moving from the angered “Why should I?” to the challenging “What, are you going to change something?” to the more disciplined “You are a professional in the Philippines but you are a maid here. I know that I’m a DH so I did my work very well.” The mantra “you are a maid here” provides for Maria a map of the affective states permissible in this workplace structure as it has been laid out by the state—a reminder that she is not in the home but in the professional space the state encouraged them to imagine. We might

also consider the many cognitive steps required for Maria to do this work of disaffection: keen awareness of the environment, judgment, assessment of risks and priorities, interpreting behavior, inferring mood and motive, and a big picture systemic view of things (Rose). It is important to understand that this is how Maria kept her job and made sure that her employer treated her well or “loved” her as she called it. Maria explained that when your employer doesn’t love you, you’ll suffer physically. She said “if your boss is not so good, your food sometimes is only twice and sometimes once a day. How can you do a job if your stomach is empty and you have a headache because you are starving?” Maria explained then that being able to appear unaffected—withhold pride and anger—while displaying composure, and still performing domesticity and care, is what made it possible for her to survive.

*Discernment: “You Are a Professional in the Philippines, but You Are a Maid Here”*

As part of her affect management, Maria provides us a short glimpse of her past. She said, “I’m a maid there [...] if you are a maid, do not tell yourself that ‘I am a professional.’ You are a professional in the Philippines, but you are a maid here.” I believe that Maria’s statement “but you are a maid here” is not an attempt at erasure of her past, but rather a kind of active reflection that helps make sense of the anger that she is feeling and the situation that is causing her anger. In saying “you are a professional [...] but you are a maid here” she brings the past (you are a professional) in the present (you are a maid here) and holds these two identities alongside each other. This disconnect between the past and present allows her to make sense of her feeling and to understand where her anger comes from—from the directive that she must forget the past in order to be in the present. Maria makes the same comparison of past and present again in this description of her pre-departure training experience:

“Sometimes your boss is angry. Do not answer back [our trainer said]. But then sometimes Filipinos are hard-headed. And they do not want to. You know, sometimes we think we are bossy. You know that? That feeling? Because sometimes you are a DH, but in the Philippines you are not so, you are not like that. So maybe your perception is not so good.”

When Maria says “sometimes you are a DH, but in the Philippines you are not so, you are not like that” she describes a constant back and forth between the identity she must take on as a DH, an overseas migrant worker in a subservient position with few rights and protections, and who she is in the Philippines, someone who is and can be “bossy.” When she says “sometimes we think we are bossy,” she describes a pride that comes back and that can’t completely be erased—an affect that can’t be removed. This practice of reflecting on where one’s present emotions come from and how emotions connect to you to others is what Brennan calls discernment, a conscious examining that happens during the transmission of affect. Discernment, Brennan argues, is a simultaneously cognitive and affective practice involving an indistinguishable enmeshment of thought and feeling. It includes reviewing the history of one’s own feelings and following “an essentially historical procedure in order to recover a truth” (121). This is the realm of critical literacy and of higher order thinking—taking old information and combining it with the new to transform knowledge, solve a problem, or come to a resolution.

This discernment process, where Maria brings her past and present together to recover a truth, can be seen in her narratives. In the scene with her employer, Maria relates the event first as it happened (the mother asked “why did you not tell me?”), but the rest of the event she relates through an imagined interior dialogue. She did not actually say aloud “Why should I? Because there is no relevance. [...] What, are you going to change something [...]?” to her employer, but



is conveying a response she gave in her mind at the time or perhaps a response that she would give now if she could. It was not a history as the “way-it-really-was” but what David Eng would call “history as affect” that reveals a history as “it-could-have-been.” These feelings of anger toward her inability to take pride in her work and the inability of her intelligence to be valued as it should were more “true” to her than the unfeeling mask she put up to perform that state’s version of the docile worker. Maria makes a similar rhetorical move in describing her response to the pre-departure training. While the trainer says “do not answer back” when your boss is angry, Maria conveys a history as it-could-have-been when she says “but then sometimes Filipinos are hard-headed. And they do not want to.” This is not a history-as-it-was, or something that was actually said in the moment of the training, but reflects an affective response that wasn’t captured in the historical happenings. She traces it here when she says “you know that? You know that feeling?” She attempts to connect the disconnected, tracing her affective memory, to the scene of her actions, and to the feelings of others. She effectively engages in knowledge transformation in order to self-author a place in the world where her feelings are not erased and her words are not silent. This echoes what Eng has said about affect’s productive relationship with language: “affect might come to supplement history as the way-it-really-was by providing another language for loss [...] [this] works to expand the signifying capacities of language and to endow forgotten creatures and things with new historical significance and meaning” (172). According to Eng, this allows Maria to keep the past actively alive. Maria’s anger finds justification and resonance as she remembers her history as a professional. This affective positioning again shows a stark contrast to the affect promoted in government educational programs—instead of looking up toward the triumphant hero rhetoric, instead Maria looked back to her past, and as I will argue next, looked across to the other migrant workers in similar positions.

*Anger: “If I Did Not Have the Guts, I Would Have Nothing at All”*

After working in Hong Kong for two years, Maria got news from the Philippine consulate that the Philippine government was trying a new program to bring professionals back to the Philippines. All she would need to do is pass the licensure exam, and she would be offered an automatic teaching contract in the Philippines. She did pass the exam, without studying this time, and received her teaching license. But when she returned problems started to emerge in her dealings with the government. Although she had a letter from the Consulate that she was a recipient of the Balik-Turo program, her name was not on the Consulate’s master list. She describes the situation this way: “Imagine I broke my contract with my employer [...] and I went here and then after that no job. So you cannot come back to Hong Kong because of course your employer got another maid. So how can you do that? I told them. I have a family, and then no earnings, no job, cannot go back again.”

Maria then had to go the main office for the Department of Education in Manila to talk to the administration there, including the then Secretary of Education, who Maria claims denied that she was on the list as a recipient of Balik-Turo. “When I went to the regional office, and then they told me, you do not have a job here, you do not have your name here. So of course, my temper burst, and I was very angry. I was very angry at that time, knowing I have a job and then you told me that there’s not job at all [...] You see if I did not have guts, I would have nothing at all.”

This moment in Maria’s life, though it happened about fifteen years before our interview took place, was one that she articulated as a defining moment for her—the moment when her temper burst. She further explained, “I went there, and I told them, okay if you will not give me

my name, I will go to the TV station, to the news station, and then I will tell to the whole world, to the nation, that the government is useless, that the government is fake.” The government employee Maria talked to was not happy with Maria’s questioning and demands. As Maria described it,

“She was very angry, and she told me ‘Do you know who you are?’ [And I said] Yes I know who I am. I am a teacher, and if my name was not listed here, I would not come to you. I will not spend my time to talk to you. And then, you see, you want some applicants to put there, and then you, I mean you make me like a scratch [out]. No, I will not allow you to do that to me.”

We might contrast these statements from Maria here from her description of her mentality in Hong Kong. Instead of moving back and forth between identities, she says directly “I know who I am. I am a teacher.” And while she stays silent and invisible in her employer’s household, here in the Philippine government office, she states that the employee cannot scratch her name out from the Consulate list as if she does not exist. Rhetorical theorist Daniel Gross, interpreting Aristotle’s discussion of anger writes, “Anger is a deeply social passion provoked by perceived, unjustified slights, and it presupposes a public stage where social status is always insecure [...] anger is constituted [...] in relationships of inequality” (2). Gross goes on to explain that one would not, on a desert island, be subject to anger because anger does not come from private feelings alone. He argues, “Aristotle’s anger presumes a contoured world of emotional investments, where some people have significantly more liability than others” (3). Gross’s theorization of the sociality of emotions, and the structured power relations that create the spatialization of emotions into a “contoured world” and “public stage” can help us understand Maria’s sudden burst of emotion. Here, Maria is able to envision her public stage—the nation—

symbolized in one office in one government building talking to one government worker. She fantasizes and threatens a larger public stage—a national audience reached via news station. Maria realizes that in this space, she has a wider “emotional range” that is permissible (Gross 4) in which others, her fellow Filipino citizens, might recognize and respond to her anger.

Maria’s affect, which has so long been controlled in proper relations with overseas employers, had reached the point of saturation. And, it was Maria’s inability to move and the false promises of mobility that triggered her emotional break down. Rather than choose disengagement, Maria had the opposite response. As she put it, her affective bubble burst and the boundaries of the limited affective states which she was allowed as a worker were transgressed. Maria sought was Gregg calls “freedom from the strictures of appropriate affect management” (264) and this freedom allowed her to articulate a critical position against the government.

*Matiyaga: “Filipinos are hard-headed”*

Discernment shifts the contexts of emotions. Instead of imagining emotions as self-contained in the individual, they point outward to the environment. By understanding the affective moves of disaffection and discernment, we can complicate a virtue like *matiyaga*, a characteristic that the Philippine state uses to market its care workers abroad and discipline their emotions in training. In my interviews with migrant care workers, I asked about the skills that they thought made Filipinos attractive on the global labor market. They all responded that patience, or *matiyaga*, was perhaps the care worker’s most valuable skill. Luz, for example explained that she obtained her job with her Israeli employer because Israeli’s liked older workers who they considered *matiyaga*. Rose, a woman who trained to be a caregiver in Europe, claims that “Filipinos have this tender loving care aspect [...] we have more patience than other nationalities, we love the

employer, we treat them as our relative even though they are just our employer.” Rose echoes a sentiment often expressed by the Philippine state when they market their workers abroad: *matiyaga* is an expression of love in the pseudo-family relationship care workers are often encouraged to have with the families they work with. If a maid is patient with her employer’s demands, this affect is based on the internal feelings she holds for her employer. However, Maria’s experience reveals that migrants practice *matiyaga* in ways that are more complex than these traditional notions of patience articulated by the state and by foreign employers.

The *bagong bayani* figure, the hero, is always about moving forward, and in order to do so erases from the past the tragedies and violence that brought the hero into being. Evgeny Dobrenko, for example, has written that the Soviet hero-worker mythologized through Soviet realism was brought into being through the concealment of violence: “Heroism is about the erasure of a memory of violence [...] this heroism wants to forget the violence that engendered it” (217). But for Maria, the rationalization for withholding emotion was not an erasure but an intentional remembering. In her reflection on the circumstances of her patience—on why she needed to be patient and how she came to this position—she is able to remember the anger and traumas that engendered them. She creates an affective archive of her literacy’s gains and losses. In our interview, Maria connects feelings of anger with other moments in her migration trajectory—anger when she attempted to come back to the Philippines through Balik-Turo, but had to battle with the government for months before they honored the letter promising her guaranteed teaching position. Anger toward the fact that women still go abroad for domestic work and that her own daughter is now working abroad as a nurse in Saudi Arabia. She tells me that there were over 1000 women who applied for the Balik-Turo program and only 300 were able to gain teaching positions. Still there are hundreds of thousands of women in Hong Kong

and Singapore and thousands of other professionals who did not have an opportunity like Balik-Turo, she said. Anger is a memory that resonates to other experiences in her life and the lives of other migrants, and anger propels her to action as she tell me “maybe you can ask the government, you can write a message [...] that I interviewed an OFW [and her] dream is no more DH [...] The government, they do not want to open their minds. You can do that. I will thank you that, and I will read your message or read your wakeup call to them and then one day, the government will do something about it.” Affect, Maria shows, can connect us and can “move” people to action (Jacobs and Micciche). This is critical literacy work, work that “belies, subverts, and exposes social norms and power imbalances” (Johnson and Vasudevan 36). In allowing for memory, recollection, comparison and detachment, the discerning process of *matiyaga* allows for an alternative rhetorical space to bring the past into the present, offering what Manalansan calls a way to “open up social and occupational spaces for themselves,” a possibility for not only surviving the day but “moving on” to the next one (220). Maria describes Filipinos as collectively “hard-headed”—a phrase that invokes the mind, the corporeal experience and the senses. Here Maria provides a different figuring of the migrant body—different from the soft vulnerable worker or the unfeeling rational being. Hard-headedness indicates an unwillingness to let the affects circulated by the state—affects that promote silence and submission—permeate. It is a figure that is neither hero nor waste labor, but strong, intelligent, and feeling.

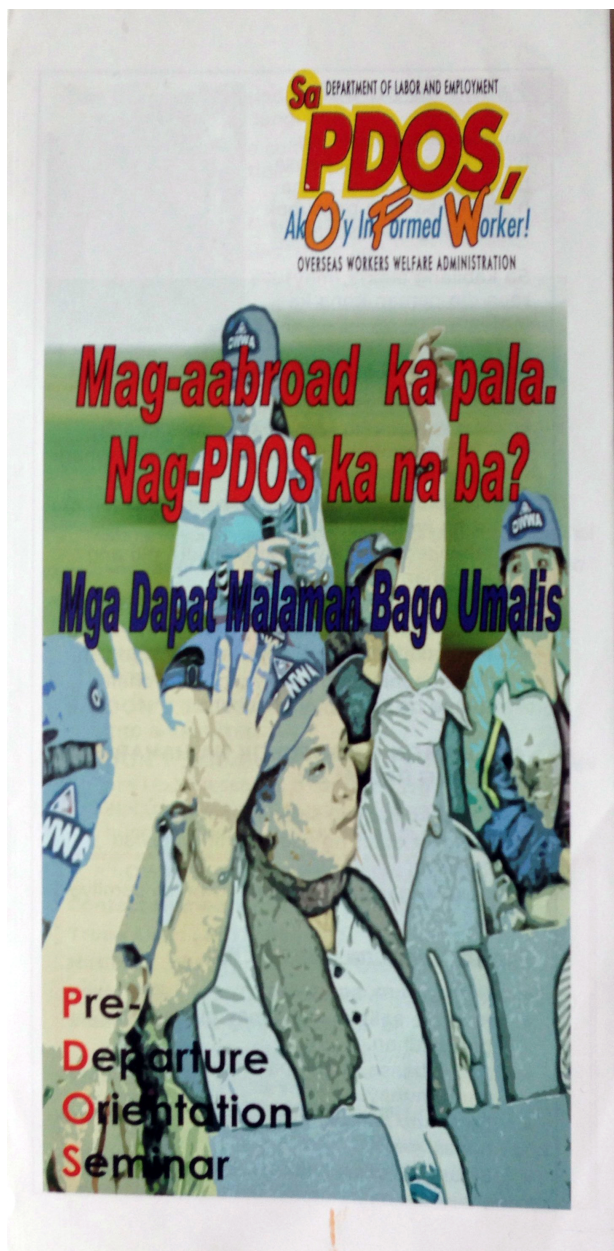
### *Chapter Three Figures and Tables*

Skills Development Programs and Policies for Temporary Migrant Workers			
Date	Government agency	Program/Policy Name	Function
1995	Republic of the Philippines	Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act (Republic Act 8042)	First policy to establish migrants' rights and the means of the government to protect overseas migrant workers.
2003	POEA/OWWA	Memorandum of Instruction No. 13	Pre-departure Orientation Trainings are transferred to OWWA for regulation and the accreditation of providers.
2006	TESDA	Supermaids, part of SUPERPinoy (Skills Upgrading Program for Employment and Re-employment of Pinoys)	Provide an extra- or "value-added" (Guevarra) skills training for domestic workers, and other repatriated workers.
2007	POEA	Household Service Worker Reform Package	Made mandatory NCII training for household service workers; set minimum wage and minimum age for workers
2007	TESDA	Language Skills Institutes	Provides basic training in English, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Arabic, and Spanish for "advantage in a global labor market that is linguistically and cultural diverse" (TESDA, "Foreign Language)
2009	OWWA	Comprehensive Pre-departure Training for Household Service Workers	4-6 day training that includes stress management, language training and culture familiarization; This training would replace the PDOS for Household Service Workers.
2010	Republic of the Philippines	Republic Act 10022	Expanded state regulations of migrant workers and recruitment agencies. Notable changes are the emphasis of government provision of skills training, the requirement of insurance, and certification by Philippine embassy of receiving countries.
2012	OWWA	Balik-Pinay Balik-Hanapbuhay	Skills training for returning domestic workers for the purpose of working in the Philippines

**Table 4: Timeline of skills development and training programs for migrant workers**







*Figure 5: OWWA brochure for PDOS; printed 2013*

## Chapter Four

### Reading Remains: Atmospheres and Archives of Loss

I argued in Chapter One that human capital externalities showcased a way of thinking about the economic subject as more than just an individual autonomous being. Economists Robert Lucas and Alfred Marshall pointing to the “mysteries” of trade that get circulated “in the air” helping people around each other to do good work—more efficient work and more innovative work. The potentials for positive productivity increase exponentially when people are around each other. Lucas agreed that there was a “force” that pulled people toward each other, a force so strong that people would leave rationality aside to absorb the extra costs of being around others, particularly those they liked and connected with. With these ideas about human capital externalities in mind, we can posit that brain drain is not just about the loss of people, but about the loss of potential, whether that is potential productivity or something else. Watkins has argued that the work of human capital is the work of creating individuals who are viable and valuable economic subjects. Following this logic, I argue that the work of brain drain is the work of constituting human capital externalities as valuable resources to the national body. Brain drain includes the work of apprehending loss, and measuring how far the loss of a person reaches. Brain drain’s persistence in the discourse of Filipino migration is a way for citizens to argue that this loss matters. In Chapter One, I discussed the perspectives that the Philippine government had about brain drain. They argued to “forget the brain drain” and focus on global competitiveness instead. However, I argue that brain drain is a valuable signifier for migrants. It acts as a marker for an important kind of national loss—the loss of state responsibility for the welfare of its citizens in a temp agency nation where large numbers of workers leave the realm of state protection.

Therefore, in this chapter I will argue that brain drain is an example of *literacy remains*—a way of thinking about literacy history that indexes “what hurts” (Eng 172) about literacy and an archive of the loss of literacy and all that literacy is supposed to bring with it. Brain drain reminds us that the pursuit of literacy—and the pursuit of the modernity and economic mobility it so often implies—has emotional, intellectual and physical costs. Rather than let this loss fade away, brain drain keeps the loss active in national memory. As Eng and Kazanjian write, thinking about remains brings the past into the present. As such, they argue that loss has a productive quality because remains can be used as a platform for future action. In this way, I argue that brain drain is a productive resource for migrants to imagine a future for literacy that moves beyond competition, regulation, and modernity. In this chapter, I highlight the narratives of Ray, an auto-technician who has migrated to Saudi Arabia and Canada, and Abby an educator in a city college in Pampanga. Abby not only has family members abroad, but teaches a student population in which she estimates about eighty to ninety percent will attempt to migrate. Like Eng and Kazanjian, I place less emphasis on *what* is lost, and instead am more interested in how loss is apprehended. Ray and Abby’s narratives highlight the ways that the losses experienced in the brain drain of Filipino migrant workers can lead to a productive engagement with spaces and temporalities. They both read the “atmosphere” (Anderson) as losses are felt in the corporeal, material, and sensory components of the everyday—bodies, condo developments, automobiles, roads, crosswalks, humidity, darkness, hatred, remittances, and other such objects and senses make up the collective affects of space. Thus atmosphere creates an archive for what has been lost and what the possibilities could be for the future. Both Ray and Abby come to use their understanding of suffering and their feelings of melancholia as ways to imagine (and struggle to find) a different future for the Philippines and for themselves.

In their introduction to *Loss*, Eng and Kazanjian identify remains as inseparable from loss, “for what is lost is known only by what remains of it” (2). They argue that loss functions as a “placeholder,” and that loss names what is apprehended by discourses of “mourning, melancholia, nostalgia, sadness, trauma, and depression” (2). But in their understanding, loss is not just about sadness, but is productive and proactive. Because if loss is known only by what remains of it, then reading the remains—how those remains are produced, maintained or put to use for other ends—are the key to moving on. In the reading of remains, one brings the past into the present—“the past is neither fixed nor complete” (3). When we struggle with loss, we engage in a project of memory and history, allowing us to rewrite the past or imagine a different future. And as I have argued, one does not actually have to *lose* something to feel loss. As Eng and Kazanjian remind, melancholia can emerge as “imaginative capacity to make an unobtainable object appear as if lost” (13). It is the feeling of loss—whether it is the loss of energy, the depletion of affective resources, or the chronic engagement with the lost object—that opens new possibilities and that “creates a realm of traces open to signification” (4).

This is where the possibilities for new subjectivities are made, and new kinds of affective literacy work possible. For Eng and Kazanjian, the goal of engaging loss is not to think of melancholia as “a general condition of possibility for subjectivity” (51). Instead, they explore the ways in which “loss is melancholically materialized” in daily life whether those spaces are social, political, cultural, or aesthetic (5). Therefore the purpose of engaging in remains is not to identify or justify a melancholic identity, but to understand how loss is being realized, signified, and materialized in the everyday. With this in mind, we can posit that thinking of literacy remains includes imagining a literacy history that is active and incomplete; it includes thinking about a history of “what-could-have-been” (Eng 183). In the work of affective literacy, engaging

*literacy remains* does the work of creating an archive of the affective resonances of literacy. As Eng argues, “affect might be considered a form of history itself” (172). Thus, literacy remains seeks to bring affect right up alongside literacy history, marking the silences and erasures, and expanding the borders around what literacy is and does.

*Ray: “For My Entire Life, Going Back and Forth, Here and There”*

I met with Ray, a forty-eight year old auto service technician, in the dining room of my grandmother’s house. No one lived there anymore because the entire family, including my parents, had immigrated to the US gradually over the past twenty years. But their presence was there in form of the furniture and figurines purchased with remittance money that dotted the house, and in the portraits of mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles and cousins hanging on the wall and sitting on side tables and dressers. Ray was from the same barangay, and his family lived down the road, but at the time of our interview, he lived in Canada. He was just there to visit, and I was too. Around us circulated the objects and affects of a place on the move, where little felt settled, and so much felt temporary. Vincente Rafael has argued that migrant workers, particularly balikbayans, are “spectral presences in the Philippines.”

Neither inside nor wholly outside the nation-state, [migrant workers] hover on the edges of its consciousness, rendering its boundaries porous with their dollar-driven comings and goings. In this sense, they take on the semblance of spectral presences whose labor takes place somewhere else but whose effects command, by their association with money, a place in the nation-state. As extruded parts of the body politic, the traces of their bodies continue to circulate, producing ‘radical effects on people’s lives’ [.....] their absence

becomes an integral feature of vernacular narratives regarding what it means to be modern. (205-206)

Thus, migrant workers like Ray, operate in a liminal space in the national imaginary. Even in their absence, the “traces of their bodies” produce “radical effects on people’s lives.” Their absence is their presence, and their absence is productive—it is what fuels new “vernacular narratives” that circulate about modernity. In this way loss can create new literacy. I start with this notion of spectral presences because it highlights that from the point of view of the nation, Ray’s identity is already unstable, and both he and the nation are trying to apprehend the loss of his presence. Ray has been a migrant worker for over twenty years. He graduated from the University of the East in the Philippines with a degree in electrical and communications engineering, and for several years, worked at Clark Airbase, a former US military base in Pampanga. The air base closed after the US military left in 1991, leaving Ray without a job. Ray struggled to find another job in the Philippines in the area of computers and electronics and decided to later pursue his interest in cars with plans to open up his own auto mechanic shop. But in 1994, Ray was convinced by his father who was already working at General Motors in Saudi Arabia to join him in there. His plan was to only stay temporarily and to save up enough money to start his own business. But as he says, “I just kept going and going” until he noticed that over ten years had already passed.

Ray was twenty-six when he left the country. When I asked Ray about why he chose Saudi Arabia, he laughed at the word “choice.” He said, “My father was working in Saudi Arabia before, so probably it was an influence on me and besides he's working in a big company like GM, and I have a fascination of cars actually at the time. I love electronics. And then my father told me that he can get me a job there. So apparently, that's the choice.” Ray explained that the

choices were even more limited for him because he was not a “board passer.” He never took the board exam because he started working when he was still in college, and didn’t bother with the exam because he already had a job. But when Mount Pinatubu erupted, closed Clark airbase, and in Ray’s words “drove the Americans away,” he regretted not taking the exam. He explained, “But when that volcano blew up, and drove the Americans away, that’s when I thought, oh man. Oh, I had a good life there. But it happens. But I decided to go now to seek some other things. I mean, that’s when I regretted I should have taken the board exam [...] And that’s when I thought I have to go outside the country to get a good living. That’s how it is.” That’s when Ray decided to shift his focus to cars. It was a natural shift for him, because he said cars are already equipped with electronics. “Its full of electronics. So I was just fascinated by it [...] and then the next thing I know, I’m already hooked up with cars. So I’m already a mechanic.”

Ray’s migration trajectory would continue to be shaped by American political and economic events. For Ray, America would remain the absent presence guiding where he went and when. Even though the Americans left Clark, they would appear in the form of capital and luxury automobile brands in Saudi Arabia. Ray would end up in a General Motors auto shop. Post 9-11 politics would lead Ray to trainings in Kuwait and Dubai. The American-led recession would almost thwart his migration to Canada later on. Manalansan writes that “imaginary topographies” that connect the US and the Philippines as “physically contiguous” were a common feature of Filipino immigrant narratives. He writes:

“Roberto, one of my informants, told me that while he was growing up he had always thought that American was just an hour bus ride away, hidden by the mountains of his home province. As a child, he had watched gray buses containing dozens of young American men with crew cuts running down the main highway near his home on their

way to some spot in the mountains. It was only when he was eleven and he took a trip to Olongapo City that he learned that the America he thought was in the mountains was in fact only a military facility and that America was indeed very far away.” (12)

In a similar way, topographies Ray would imagine throughout his migration trajectory would be shaped by an ever-present America, so much so that it would be difficult for Ray to call any place home. Like other participants in my study, Ray would often turn to work as a source of pleasure—a space of stability in his precarity. Often, Ray would repeat his love for electronics and cars. He even spent a lengthy period of interview time explaining to me the mechanics of a car door lock—particularly the way it contained both mechanical as well as digital and electronic components, “work of the hand” and “work of the brain” (Rose). He seemed to embody what Rose, in his observation of a high school trade class, describes as the virtue found in the work of the craftsman. Rose claims that ideas separating pure intellectual work as more virtuous work, that have roots back to ancient Greece, fall short when observing a craftsman at work: “the work itself when seriously engaged—the traditions and values one acquires and the complex knowledge and skills developed—gives rise to a virtue of practice, an ethics and aesthetics, and a reflectiveness intermixed with technique” (102). This “virtue of practice” becomes important for Ray as he practices his craft under circumstances where he is seen without virtue or worth.

As I have mentioned, Saudi Arabia has long been a top destination for OFWs, and the majority of workers have been male migrants working in technical and production jobs. Rodriguez attributes this trend to the “marketing missions” of the POEA. Here she offers an excerpt from an interview with one high-ranking migration official:

In the early 1970s, I was part of the team that organized marketing missions in the United States. There we put together the biggest construction contractors along with the



Philippine private labor recruiters to talk about partnerships. The reason why we went to the United States was because it was U.S. companies that had operations in the Middle East. They were the ones behind the construction boom in the Middle East. So instead of dealing with these companies' Middle Eastern middlemen, we went straight to the head offices to get a head start over other bidders of foreign labor" (*Migrants* 59).

Because of this work by Filipino officials, Rodriguez argues that the high numbers of employment for Filipinos in Saudi Arabia is directly connected to the globalized expansion of US companies. The large number of male foreign workers created a climate for literacy and affect that was much different than any other climate described by my female informants working in other destination countries. Here, Ray describes why he believes so many Filipino men work in Saudi Arabia: "Because they have in Saudi Arabia, they have a small population. But rich in oil [...] In Saudi Arabia, they like cars. All the brands of cars are there. And all dealerships. Porche. Lamborghini. GM. Volkswagen. Audi. Ferrari." In Ray's description, Saudi Arabia is a place teeming with global capital and other signs of wealth, and they needed foreign workers to do the work to support the presence of capital. Ray explained that he worked with men from many different countries, requiring him to "mix." He said, "Me, I handle about ten to thirteen persons in my group. So have four Filipinos and Indians and Pakistani also in my group. So I have to deal with them." Ray describes his workplace as a truly global place where nationalities and languages blurred together, and many different kinds of literacies were needed to complete single tasks. He said:

"We have to talk in Arabic, in their local language. So I have to learn Arabic. [...]"

Probably I stayed there for so long, about fifteen years, so I already have daily use of their local language in Arabic. So I learn from them also. I can communicate with them

also [...] but GM uses a base in English. All technical bulletins, all technical troubleshooting is in English, so I have to translate it in Arabic, so it's hard for me sometimes. But I'm showing them lots of pictures so they can cope with it. So that's why, I had [...] a hard time, but later on, if you practice that daily, I can show them how.

When I first met Ray, I wasn't sure whether I should interview him. He was one of the first workers I interviewed in the Philippines and he didn't fit the profile of a "skilled worker." As our interview went on, it became clear to me how much high-skilled work his job involved. Ray proved to me that the lines between skilled and unskilled are blurry. He describes a place of complex literacy use. He acquired a foreign language, used his English to learn GM manuals, translated these manuals in Arabic for his colleagues, and when words didn't work, he used pictures. He also developed management skills as he organized his team of foreign workers, and every year he was picked by his company to travel to Dubai and Kuwait for training. He said that he probably went twice a year and five times in 2006. All the training was in Arabic, because as most of the trainers were from Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, and that during his time at GM, Americans would no longer conduct the trainings. "That's why they don't send any more Americans," he said. "Because they would kidnap Americans at that time, in between 2002 and 2005." This reinforces that fact that Ray's Arabic literacy was "sponsored" by American political and economic interests.

Ray described his first three years in the Saudi Arabia as very difficult because he didn't speak the language, and the weather was "really extremely hot. Plus thirty-eight, forties, forty-five [degrees Celsius], its really hot. So I had to contend with all those kind of things, people, the religion. So I miss everything that I'm doing here [in the Philippines], so I thought, I told myself, I feel that I was in a prison, just like a big prison, like that. So I'm getting salary, but its hot and

humid and the people. They are nasty. They are Muslim.” Here, Ray gives us a glimpse of the everyday affects that structure his work life: the heat and humidity that enveloped him, the hatred, racism, and negativity he felt toward his employers and the people around him who he categorized simply as “they are Muslim.” Later Ray describes the danger and violence that characterized his life there: “It’s a Muslim country, so you cannot exercise your Christian faith there, besides, there if you are not one of them, you’re an enemy. So it’s like when you go out in the streets, or you go to work, one of your foot is already at the grave. Something like that. There’s a lot of threat there.”

Ben Anderson describes “affective atmospheres” as “collective affects” that “envelope” and “press on a society from all sides” (77). These affective atmospheres, “are a class of experience that occur before and alongside the formation of subjectivity, across human and non-human materialities, and in-between subject/object distinctions.” It is in the ambiguous space “from which subjective states and their attendant feelings emerge” (78). Ray vividly portrays the “atmosphere” that he experienced in Saudi Arabia. He indeed felt a pressure from all sides—hostility, oppression, threat. These all combined to give him a sense that he was in “a prison. Just like a big prison.” He said, if you are not one of them, you’re an enemy,” which seems in so many ways to counter the narratives that the Philippine state offers about Filipino migrant workers—that they are flexible and can adapt to anyone everywhere. But Ray says clearly, foreign workers are perceived as enemies and outsiders.

It seems clear that the absent presence in Ray’s description is death. When he says “you’re foot is already in the grave,” he seems to be articulating a subjectivity almost at death—perhaps indicating the absence of a subjectivity, of no longer being in existence. This stands out in sharp contrast to other subjectivities we have seen in the brain drain discourse—the winner,

the star, the autonomous individual. Death here is a fading into nothing, a “formation of subjectivity” that is both present and absent. This recalls Rafael’s notion that migrant workers are spectral presences to the nation. Though they are gone, they are still present in the form of capital. The nation understands their loss as economic, because their remains are as such. But here Ray offers a different spectral presence—one in which the oppression of life makes him feel already dead. Again Ray repeats death when he explains why his wife never tried to join him in Saudi Arabia. He said “because of the situation. But its your time, its your time, something like that. But then again, [if] you are a God-fearing man, so whether you are in a country like that, it doesn't matter. But sometimes I'm afraid of losing my life there. But then again, I think I can give my family—I can support them, or buy anything that they need.”

After working in Saudi Arabia for 15 years, Ray got the opportunity to migrate to Canada. A colleague told him that Canada was “open” and that there were a lot of job vacancies in auto service work. Ray explained that everything happened quickly—it took only six months for him to get an employer and a visa, and in an odd stroke of luck for him, he said he was able to migrate before the recession made the job market more difficult. He describes his workplace in Canada as starkly different from Saudi Arabia. Whereas his autoshop in Saudi Arabia employed 300-400 foreign workers, his autoshop in Canada only has a fifteen and he is the only foreign worker. The “affective atmosphere” in Canada is quite different as well. Ray lived in a small town where the only other Filipino lives an hour away. He said, “I don't like the cold. I don't like the winter, it’s really a nightmare. Every time, all of Canada—its a nice country, I mean, its a great country. Except for that it’s lonely. You know, its quiet.” Ray explained that despite his feelings toward work in Saudi Arabia, he did “think twice” before leaving for Canada.

“Although, I think twice, in Saudi Arabia, I already had a position there in our company.

And then going to Canada is just like, starting all over again. Go back to the lowest, as a mechanic again. So I think twice. But then again, my goal is to be with my family.”

Despite its oppressive environment, Saudi Arabia provided a workplace for Ray to compare himself to other foreign workers. In the game of global competition, he fared quite well—he was promoted to manager and chosen to take special training sessions in other countries. He explained, “they send me, they send me there for training. And probably for the company. Sometimes there is a competition, in Dubai, they send a person and then I train that person, something like that.” But in Canada, Ray was not only “back to the lowest” in moving from manager to mechanic, but back to the lowest in the game of global competition. It seemed that Ray had moved up to a desirable country with higher pay and an opportunity for permanent immigration, but moving up only emphasized that his labors in Saudi Arabia did not accumulate into more meaningful work.

Throughout our interview, Ray repeated several times, almost every few minutes, the fact that his plan was to stay in the Philippines and open a business. Before he left for the Saudi Arabia, his plan was to come back to the Philippines and open a business. He explained, “Yeah at first, my only intention was just to have some money and then go back here, then go back and start something, small business or something like that. But it didn't happen. So just, I just keep on going, going, until I notice, oh, I spent already ten years there.” Every time he came back to the Philippines between work contracts, he thought he would save enough money to stay and open a business. And when the time came to move from Saudi Arabia to Canada, he hesitated and thought he might be able to open a business. He explained, “I told you that I had a plan to have a business, small business. And then I'm planning to open a shop, but then I again, I assess

everything, as I've seen, It's not good here. So I said okay, I'll just migrate to Canada. That's when I decided to migrate to Canada.” And then after two years of being in Canada, his plan was again to stay in the Philippines and open a business. “Before, I told myself, I will come to the Philippines and just start some small business and then live here, because its really home sweet home, I mean, there's no place like home, something like that. But then, you have to think, I went home in 2011, and still my plan is to stay here. But then when I went home last year, in April, then, shift, I change my mind of staying here.”

Ray indicates here that it is his desire to stay—that something is pulling him to want to plant roots and return home. This was something echoed repeatedly in many participants’ narratives—the dream of owning a business, of having agency over your own work, of not working for someone else, and maybe even not working for money. And the dream was to do this at “home.” To be in a place that belonged to you. “To open a business” became a kind of literacy remains—a signifier for the dream of doing something with your literacy that was your own and a dream of a Philippines where the economy was good enough to stay, and where one had a kind of ownership over his or her own life. The reason why Ray never stayed was not because he lacked money, but because of the atmosphere. He said, “I mean roaming around Manila, when I went to visit my old school, oh I was surprised to see that the streets and everything, it's really changed a lot. Really changed a lot. It's dark. And, it's really awful.” He explained that he felt like the government was too corrupt and the people were too undisciplined. In his imagined topography of the Philippines, the atmosphere, the collective affects, said there was no hope. He described the space in terms of people's behaviors in the street: “They see a red light, and they still go. You know, they will see an orange line in the middle, they still pass. That's why, I told myself, where's the discipline, that's why we are like this. We have no

discipline. I don't want to put—[pause] now it's a different kind of story. I don't want to put my children here to...to learn these kind of ways. And government doesn't do anything about this.”

He is not hopeful about the Philippines. He says, “I don’t want my children to grow up here.” The brain drain, he says is causing the “good Filipinos” to leave, leaving the corrupt and the dark behind them. “But we're still good, I mean Filipinos are still good but unless they are—they will not change. This country will not go anywhere. That’s my perception.” Yet Ray keeps coming back, not just to visit his family that still lives there, but revisiting in his imagination. Each year with each return visit, he imagines the possibility of opening up a business, of planting roots and owning a space. As Anderson has remarks, atmospheres “hold a series of opposites—presence and absence, materiality and ideality, definite and indefinite, singularity and generality—in tension” (77). Thus to think of atmosphere is to think of the possibility of the indefinite, that with each return visit, the winds might shift and change. Atmospheres point to the “uncertain, disordered, shifting and contingent—that which never achieves the stability of form” (78). Atmospheres may “perturb and haunt” fixed persons, places, or things. It is here in the atmosphere that we might find the “place” of literacy remains. For some time now, literacy studies has been concerned with place. This stems from a history of research that was interested in establishing local, situated, place-based studies of communities and groups to combat the notion that literacy was neutral and portable to everywhere in the exact same way. But as Brandt and Clinton have argued, there are limits in thinking of literacy as only embedded in the “local” because we miss out on understanding literacy’s ability to travel and its ability to delocalize and even disrupt local life. In Ray’s life, reading the affective resonances of the American presence became a literacy that would endure with him across space and time. The place of literacy remains contributes to this question of “where does literacy reside?” In Ray’s affective literacy

work, in which dislocations and displacements have characterized his migration trajectory, he maps out a subjectivity as productive being in the uncertain space of here and not, absent and present.

*Abby: "Not Just Being Heroes"*

I am sitting in the passenger seat of Abby's 1998 Toyota and she is driving me around San Fernando to different government buildings to see if she can score me an interview with officials in some of the regional government offices. First we stop by the local Pampanga office for TESDA, and when we walk in, she begins sign language to speak to a group of young people there—students of hers, she tells me later. I find out that one-fifth of the student population at the local city college, where she is head of the Information Technology department, is deaf. We spend time at TESDA and then slowly making our way down the busy highway that is the main thoroughfare of the city. We go to the local DOLE office and then down the street a few blocks to the regional office for OWWA. Eventually we make our way, down another major street that is partially shut down for construction, and causing horrendous traffic, since this street is connected to not one, but three different highway entrances. Trucks hauling sugar cane, large commuter buses filled with people on their way from Manila to Baguio, and Jeepneys, tricycles, and passenger cars, all trying to dodge the pedestrians who attempt to cross the six lane street, cause a jam so bad that it takes half an hour for us to go the half mile that will bring us to the exit for the local SM (Shoe Mart Mall) to have lunch. While waiting, we comment on the Pampanga's traffic, almost as bad as Manila (but not quite, nothing could be as bad as Manila), and lament about pedestrians who try to cross the busy street without using the crossing lanes or footbridge. Later Abby tells me that, rumor has it, they are widening the roads because of the



possibility that a new international airport will come to Pampanga. A development she claims, signals that Pampanga will grow to become the new IT hub in the Philippines. She explains: “If you know the geographic location of Pampanga, it’s a merging point. If you’re coming from the North, like from Baguio City or Tarlac, you’ll pass by Pampanga. If you go west, you pass by Pampanga, so it could really be a hub of IT. Clark is near, [Naval Base] Subic [Bay] is near. I think we have a seaport at Subic, we have airports here, an international airport. So the access is here in Pampanga. No doubt, Pampanga will be a center for the IT industry, maybe 5 years from now.” In our interview, I find that Abby acts as a local tour guide, but rather than point to landmarks, cultural attractions or quirky cultural practices, she interprets the political and economic meanings of the local space around her—the larger motivations behind street construction, the lack of discipline the pedestrians show that she is trying to combat among her students.

I turn here to Abby to illustrate how “those left behind” apprehend the losses of the brain drain. For both Ray and Abby, reading the atmosphere was an affective literacy that became a guide for the orienting and re-orienting of affective energies. Reading the atmosphere became a way of reading the remains of that which had been lost in the pursuit of capital and modernity. And as such, reading the atmosphere was a way of imagining a future. As we can see, Abby is much more positive about the possibilities for the Philippines’ future—the new developments and widening roads project an energized possibility. The undisciplined bodies are only a temporary roadblock in an inevitable march toward progress. She believes that the future is in Pampanga—that it will be hub for technology and a place for local and national border-crossings. When American military and naval forces left Clark and Subic, they left large empty and developed facilities that were ripe for foreign investment—places for literacy and other

human capital resources to thrive with productivity. She believed it was time for Filipinos to flourish in these “remains” of American presence, erasing the histories of war and violence, and turning them into something else. But for both Ray and Abby, the atmosphere suggests uncertainty—change might be in the air, and could be seen in the new condo developments, sprouting business, fancy hotels, and widening roads, but Abby was unsure about what new subjectivities would come with it. As an educator firmly against her students participating in the brain drain, she knew that she wanted to her students to “not just be heroes outside.” But she had trouble articulating a subjectivity that would neither be hero or undisciplined body.

I met Abby through a local educational administrator, who recommended that Abby accompany me to try to get some information from the government agencies in the area since she had long-standing relationships with them. We imagined they might be able to provide me local migration statistics. It was only on our trek through the city that I learned Abby felt very strongly about brain drain—she was thoroughly and vehemently against it, though at the same time, intimately connected to it. She explained that as a teacher, she actively tries to prevent her students from leaving. As a teacher and head of the IT department for a school that has students that are “the poorest of the poor”, she believes that curbing brain drain requires a local and global knowledge—being able to read changes in landscape, making connections with businessmen and local politicians, establishing internships or on-the-job training opportunities, maintaining relationships with Clark Development Corporation (the agency that caters to employment in Clark-area businesses) for her students, and keeping in contact with former students who have gone abroad to Singapore, Dubai and elsewhere, so they can tell her about new technological trends. She said:

“My first year, I said I’m going to stay in and teach these students. And they might want to stay in the Philippines after graduation. For me, its— maybe you have to encourage them to stay. And maybe, you should shed light to them that there is something here in the Philippines that they could stay. That they have to stay. Diba? They have to help the Philippines. Not just being heroes outside. They have to stay here.”

Abby has first hand experience with the brain drain as several family members, including her mother and sister, were currently abroad. She was proud of her identity as University of the Philippines graduate, an institution that she said instilled the ideas of national pride and loyalty. Rather than believe, as Arroyo did, that migration leads to more opportunity and development, she said it as a lack of loyalty to the Philippines. She said, “First my mom is already an OFW before. I think she went to Israel when I was first-year college? And then, up to now. So even my uncles, my aunts. Just for us to have better education.” She said the words “just for us to have a better education” in a sarcastic sing-song voice. Her disdain for the culture of brain drain became evident when she says that her father had the opportunity to go abroad, but he decided not to go. “He didn’t take it because maybe, just maybe, because my dad is a little intelligent. So he told me that I need to stay here because I want to help the Filipino farmers. He was working with the farmers. So if I’m going to leave, I’m not going to be able to help these farmers. So I have to stay. So we really live in a very simple—our lives are very simple.” While she describes her father as intelligent for not going abroad, she describes her mom as “scared” for not going abroad and then later “willed. Willed—she’s very willed. She’s very willed to go abroad.” Rather than believe that migrant workers were sacrificial heroes, she believed that those who stayed were considerate of those they would leave behind. Her father was an insurance underwriter for a health insurance corporation who worked with local farmers.

Abby's affective responses to her mother's leaving and her father's staying colors her own decision about migration. She recently had the opportunity to go to Singapore because her husband was there on a temporary contract job, and she went to visit him. She said, "then I brought my resume, my documents, everything. And then I got, after 7 days I got an interview. And then, when its time for me to go to the Ministry of Manpower, I got scared, and then I told my husband "no, I'm going home. I can't be working here." She explained that even though the pay was good, she "chickened out" and couldn't get herself to finish the paperwork. When I asked her why she didn't want to stay, she explained:

It's not the working environment, because I have my own office already there. Maybe it's not that. Its not the pay because its. [pause]. Just maybe, you're working for them, and then, back here at home, I mean everybody, majority of us are starving. And maybe that's it. My children are here. Although, Singapore is like three hours from here, they could uh, just ride [a plane at] Clark [Airport]. But no. I like it here. Here I can rest. Like for a week, I can go to the beach for a week. Singapore, no. I can't do that.

To understand Abby's reasons for not working abroad, we might recall Lucas and Marshall here. They believed in external effects of human capital—that individual gains have a social benefit, that people affect other people, that the forces bringing people near each other might defy the logic of rational choice. To use the language of affect, we might say that they believed that bodies affect other bodies transferring their energies and intensities. Abby seems to follow this same belief. As she is on her way to the labor office with papers in hand, she imagines that national body that Bhagwati and Hamada identified as "those left behind." When she says, "you're working for them" and "back here at home, I mean everybody, majority of us are starving," she evokes two separate bodies—the "them" that signifies capital and those who have

it and the “us” who are starving with nothing. She identifies that capital brings with it the labor to pursue it, when she later shifts the topography from a place of starving to a place of vacation—“I like it here. Here I can rest.”

She said that she consistently encouraged her students to stay in the Philippines to work. But as a teacher of IT, it was difficult. Programmers are desperately needed abroad, particularly in Singapore and Dubai, two of the world’s fastest growing technology centers. So while she kept one eye on the local landscape, with the other, Abby kept track of the global labor market, developing a course that led to TESDA certification in programming that would be recognized worldwide for professional certification. She also kept up relationships with recruiters from Singapore that she met at conferences, informing her students of opportunities she has heard of and helping students with the process of recruitment, including the paperwork and knowledge of the culture, such as living expenses. (She claimed that several of her students already had interviews set up in Singapore in three months.) And she kept in touch with students who were abroad, often asking them what the newest technology trends were. She said, “I would tell them: Hi, what’s new there. Give it to me,” she said with a laugh. “What’s new, *diba*? They get their labor, [she says of Singapore] I get the knowledge.” In this way, the migration of her students prompted more literacy work from Abby—a new course for programmers, new knowledge about migration requirements, new kinds of communications and networks for sharing knowledge. As Rafael would say, the lost bodies of technology workers prompted Abby to develop new literacies to keep up with their versions of modernity and progress. And yet while loss, may be productive for literacy, it furthered enhanced the violences that brought them into being.

Abby recognized the reasons why her students would want to go abroad, and said, “They grew up poor, they have had nothing. You cannot blame them for wanting to go where they will

get paid more.” To address the poverty of her students, Abby tried to set up work opportunities for her students in the Philippines both so they could eat and also to prove to them that you could make money working in the Philippines. She detailed one example for me, where she set up an opportunity for a group of her students to develop the website for the local TESDA office. She explained how surprised the students were that they could get paid so much money—100,000 pesos for the project—and just stay home. She herself has set up her own local employment and hopes that she acts as a model for her students to be entrepreneurs. She owns a computer shop in a nearby city where she often hires students to work for her. She explained that this is one way she enforces a disciplined work ethic among her students: “if they don’t have their daily allowances, they get to work there. So I do not just give them fish. I teach them how to fish. You don’t have money, you could clean my house, look for Pepsi bottles and sell them. I just don’t give them money.” But she proves to her students that she can make money with her endeavors. In addition to the computer shop, she also works as a freelance software developer. Recently, a friend of hers asked her to create a point of sale system for construction materials where she got paid 30,000 pesos for a six-week job. “I’m just at home doing that,” she says. Praising the benefits of working from home, she jokes, “And then if I’m hungry, I just take my merienda (snack) and sleep if I want.” Abby often contrasted the images of “working from home” and “working abroad,” insisting there was a way to make money without leaving the comforts of home.

In fact, Abby claimed that her relationship to local business was the first priority for her as a teacher: “If and when they call us for a meeting, even if I’m very busy, I go. I’ll take time. Because I want to keep my students updated. Its not purely teaching, and then after they graduate, we don’t care anymore, no. I’m not that type. Because after graduation, that’s when I

look after them. Do you have a decent job? Are you not underemployed? I don't like my students to experience underemployment. I mean, they have the skills, they should get paid." She explained how she created a curriculum specifically for the local employment opportunities:

"From the way the BPO industries are coming up, they're making Pampanga an IT hub.

Pampanga Chamber of Commerce is already coming up with programs that would cater to BPO.

So I tell [my students], the BPO industry is coming very fast. And I think we have to be ready for that. My curriculum now I have an elective for BPO industries. I tell them, if and when you stay

here, you can help Pampanga. Because the president of the chamber of commerce knows me and he can tap me as a provider of labor from school, I can recommend." Though she recognizes that

some of the changes may not all be positive (the widening of roads is causing the destruction of trees, outsourcing is not the as ideal as locally owned businesses), Abby projects a future for

Pampanga that does not involve its citizens going overseas. "In the area close to the college, a local development group bought a big lot. The rumor is that it will be condos. And everyone is saying 'condominiums in Pampanga? Oh really?'" "It's going to be crowded," she predicts.

"There will be a lot of traffic, but at least you will not see beggars. Diba? Or very few of them, maybe. Pero, five years. Counting five years. Let's hope."

It is not just knowledge of the latest industries that Abby believes will bring success to her students and to the Philippines, but Abby reinforced ideas of discipline and work attitude—she teaches affect management. Work attitude involved both a stance that work was not just about money, and also that one becomes a good worker through specific disciplining of time. She explains,

"But if you get called, you have to be on time. If they say 8 o'clock you have to be there 7:59. Not 8:01, not 8:02. But on or before 8 o'clock. That's one discipline. Time. Work

attitude. I always tell them, you can earn money. Money's everywhere, so look for it....So I always tell them, it's not about money it's not about how intelligent you are. It's the discipline. It's your work attitude that will get you somewhere. It's not intelligence. *Parang* intelligence will get you somewhere but character, it will get you anywhere. Because when you have an attitude that you don't work for money, life is easier. For me it should be money working for me, not me working for money. It should be the other way around. Money working for me. So they can actually put up their business after graduation. I mean minimal capital. But the return of the investment is fast and then, I think that is one way of getting a better life."

While Abby hoped for a better life for her students and a better life for the Philippines, Abby had a hard time imagining a "better life" not driven by capital—she says she wants money to work for her, not her to work for money. Other images she offered of the good life are familiar to Western modernity—she tells her students they can work at home and opportunities are always out there for work (she herself as three different jobs—teacher, freelance programmer, and computer shop owner), she tells them they can open up a business and earn as much money as they could abroad. She tells them that if they work hard enough and have discipline—if they arrive on time, if they have the right character and the right work attitude, they could succeed. And as much as she didn't want to work for a Singapore company, she wanted the Singapore life. She said says of people in the Philippines who don't cross in the middle of the street:

"That's one indicator that we're too far from being disciplined [...] That's why um, I keep telling my students. Discipline is the first thing that you must have. You must possess discipline. Other than that, no, you won't get anywhere. Just look at Singapore. All of the citizens are very disciplined. Yeah, you could actually leave your Chanel, or your



Burberry bag, Hermes bag, anywhere, and then, when you come back, its still there. [...]

You could leave your iPhone and nobody would check. I don't know if we could do that in the Philippines. But there you could actually do that there. You just walk around at one o'clock in the morning. Nobody will, nobody...its just simply safe. You just walk. Here?

You get robbed. You can't walk.”

Abby described Singapore as the ideal place of development—a place where you could leave your Burberry bag or your iPhone at your table and no one will steal it (even at the time of our interview, she points out she didn't bring a bag with her to the mall). A place where everyone follows the rules. And a place where a body has freedom to walk around at any time (as long as it's the crosswalk). Thus, Abby might be reading the landscape for change, but finding that what she wants may be not all that different from what drives the principles of brain drain.

### *Conclusion*

Both Ray and Abby come to imagine the externalities—the external effects of human capital—as affective. After brain drain, what's left over from the human capital transaction is an atmosphere that is uncertain and subjectivities that move back and forth from present and absent. I want to situate Ray and Abby's narratives here within existing studies of transnational literacy.

Transnational literacy studies has focused on the additive possibilities of literacy that exists in and creates transnational social fields and that ties migrants to places of origin and other geographically dispersed places. Transnational literacies has also focused on the actual products or technologies of literacy—the evidence of literate ability—including remittances, digital correspondences or conversations, letters, text messages, etc. This research has rightly pointed to the multidimensionality of transmigrants intellect and literacy abilities. This is often, as Teague

and Jimenez have argued in their research, to contradict notions of migrants as lacking in ability, particularly English language ability or Euro-American ways of knowing. Much of this research has set out to contradict deficit models of teaching English language learners or immigrant youth in order to shift focus from “what they do not yet know and what they cannot yet do” to highlighting their “mobility as well as the multiple identities, languages, and literacies that often result from their transnational affiliations” (1).

Indeed, my research has confirmed that transnational mobility can increase literacy—whether through the acquiring of additional languages or additional skills sets. The daily practice of literacy is largely about gain—when we work, when we live life, we learn and we accumulate experience and knowledge. So Ray did gain literacy—he acquired Arabic through his many years of working in Saudi Arabia. He brought together mechanical forms of knowledge with digital forms of knowledge. He learned to speak with his body when he couldn’t communicate verbally, and he acquired skills in management when he took over the management of the group of workers in his shop. There is no doubt that Ray was learning and acquiring new literacies made possible through his transnational movement. He was a multi-lingual and highly-skilled migrant worker doing a job that he enjoyed and took pleasure in. For Abby the absent presence of lost technology workers sparked accumulated literacy for her—she developed new curriculums based on what her former students told her was the next trend for technology, and to combat the absence of her former students she emphasized affective literacies with her current students, emphasizing discipline and work attitude. Yes, there were literacies produced in transnational movement, yet, these literacies should not overshadow the complexity of these gains. The daily experience of movement is more complicated than simple formulas of addition and subtraction. Abby teaches students who she hopes will accumulate literacies—both school

knowledge and embodied knowledge. She hopes for what Brandt has argued about the accumulation of literacy—that literacy will accumulate over time, like capital, creating the deep infrastructures for learning that come to support (and put pressure on) future generations of learners. But she finds that in Pampanga, literacy accumulation doesn't seem to stick. Her students leave to go abroad, or even if they stay, they have difficulty cashing in on the literacy they have invested in. Ray may have gained Arabic literacy, but he lost much and suffered much in the process. Although Ray accumulated many literacies, he did so in the context of trauma and displacement. What stands out from both Ray and Abby's narratives is the deep and intense suffering that plagues both migrant life abroad and the life of those left behind. For both, loss is signified in the undisciplined bodies that seem to be figures of hopelessness and darkness. What does it mean to accumulate literacy while at the same time feeling that you have "one foot in the grave"? It is my hope that *literacy remains* offers an approach to transnational literacy that makes visible loss and gain and that captures these complexities of transnational life.

## Chapter Five

### Intimate Technologies: Documents, Affect, and State Authority

Modernity is and has always been structurally affective.

—Mazzarella (298)

I have argued in Chapters Two and Three that the state engages in affective literacies in the areas of higher education regulation and skills training. This chapter looks particularly at the way that the state is structured affectively through another kind of literacy—documents, or literacy as an organizing technology. In this chapter I build on Kate Vieira’s argument that documents “make up the brick and mortar” of state borders (“American” 54). In the temp agency nation, these documents do not move without affect. As Mazzarella indicates in the epigraph above, modernity, including its bureaucratic apparatuses, is structurally affective. Therefore, I will illustrate that affect supports the structure of the state as document workers are in charge of harnessing affective flows and migrant desires. This chapter examines the jobs of two workers in the Philippines whose primary duties are to process the legal and certifying papers of Filipino migrant workers with the purpose of understanding how workers from the temp agency nation navigated what Julie Chu calls “paper trails,” referring to the text-heavy migration process of visas and other certifications that constrict the movement of migrants. Counterintuitive as it may seem, I argue that state documents do not distance the citizen from the state in the temp agency nation. Rather documents are a site of intimacy. As the pressures of competition and desperation shape migrant trajectories, migrants demonstrate affective responses through engaging with documents as state authority. My research shows that migrants view the state less as an authoritative govern body and more like an employer and they use their documents to leverage particular demands. I have already argued that the responsibility for citizen welfare has been the

collateral damage of the push for brain drain migration. In response to this loss, migrants show disregard for state authority. The interviews and observations I will discuss in this chapter build on other mentions of cynicism and disappointment about the state from interviews I had with migrants themselves. Ray, who I discussed in the last chapter, surmised that the smart thing for him to do, if he wanted to stay in the Philippines, would be to go into politics where he would make more money from all the fees he believed that government officials pocketed. He said, “Our government is...I don’t want to say it but they just put here [motions to pocket]. That’s how it is here.” Ray compared his experience buying a car in Canada where he said it takes just “15 minutes, and its in my name.” He said in the Philippines it would take months to have a vehicle in his name, because there is so much red tape. Thus, when migrants do engage with the state, they use their affective literacies to push for faster document processing or maneuver around legality, ultimately contesting the claim that state “authorizes” their lives and that documents represent their full identities as citizens.

Immigration scholars have written about the ways that texts and documentation create borders, particularly nation-state borders, and halt mobility (Chu; Vieira, “Undocumented”). And in globalization studies, the saying goes that capital and information can travel across the globe at an accelerated pace, but people do not. Yet the POEA processes the deployment of over 1 million migrants a year—an average of nearly 3,000 employment visas per day. This is even more extraordinary considering the relative inefficiency of government in a developing country such as the Philippines, which struggles even to maintain basic infrastructure like roads and water. Robyn Rodriguez explains it this way:

“Migrants are processed through each agency in a remarkably orderly way despite the volume of people handled on a daily basis. The ordered operations at these agencies are

in sharp contrast to the disorder and chaos that characterize the operations of all other governmentally regulated aspects of Philippine economics, political and social life. Just outside the POEA compound, for instance, one is confronted with unruly Manila traffic: road markers and traffic signs have no meaning and are blatantly disregarded as a matter of habit. Yet the POEA manages to process thousands of people for overseas employment every day.” (*Migrants* 39)

She continues to argue that this bureaucracy operates like “a well-oiled machine facilitating the process of authorization and thereby speeding up the process of labor” in contrast to the life outside the bureaucracy. Rodriguez’s argument is that the state is “invested in the production of migrants for export” and thus stress rationality and efficiency in their bureaucratic processes (*Migrants* 41), and that the state’s attempt to gain an award from the International Organization for Standardization was attempt to prove the Philippine government is modern and competitive on the global stage, as opposed to backward developing countries with less efficient bureaucracies. While it is true that the POEA is exceptional in its efficiency to process migrant documentation, and that much of the nation’s neoliberal labor export policy drives this efficiency, my observations and interviews with the workers who support the bureaucracy show that the movement of papers is not a seamless process. As Anna Tsing argues, globalization and the processes that facilitate global movement happen through *friction*: “the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (4). As she explains: “A wheel turns because of its encounter with the surface of the road; spinning in the air it goes nowhere. Rubbing two sticks together produces heat and light; one stick alone is just a stick. As a metaphorical image, friction reminds us that heterogenous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power” (5). Tsing’s metaphor here allows us to think of

mobility at the same time as immobility. Tsing's ultimate argument is to challenge the way scholars view the seeming homogenizing power of globalization, but the idea of friction is useful here for examining practices that attempt to facilitate mobility. As Tsing argues, "Friction refuses the lie that global power operates as a well-oiled machine" (6), and, as I will illustrate, the same said could be said for "state power" as well. Frictions between affects and documents, between the state's interests and migrant interests, show that the state's boundaries are porous and permeable. Acknowledging the affective structures of the state can help us better understand its limitations—as I will show, migrants' affects cannot be fully harnessed.

The framework of friction brings an added textural dimension to current work in rhetoric and composition already interested in transnational circulation of text and discourse. This growing scholarship has explored the ways that texts, such as digital correspondences or letters can sustain communication across borders (Hawisher and Selfe; Lam). It has also focused on transnational connectivities or linkages to examine the movement of discourses (Dingo; Hesford and Schell; Queen). And even before the growing interest in transnationalism, the field has long considered the ways in which literacy acts as a technology that can organize society and create complex commercial and administrative networks at a distance to fulfill the "modernization" of society. For example, Schryer and Smith's work on what they call "documentary society" acknowledges the materiality of texts and the ways in which documents organize social life. They argue that what is notable about texts in particular are their ability to organize society in forms that are "translocal." Creators of texts can coordinate work and other actions in local settings that then organize them translocally, and organizations can expand into multiple sites and their operations distributed. They allow for the presence of a single entity in multiple places and they make possible what Schryer and Smith call "action at a distance." Brandt and Clinton

have also written about this quality of the technology of literacy –it has transcontextual and transcontextualizing potential, as well as the ability to travel, integrate and endure. Historians have argued that writing helped bring along the existence of bureaucracy itself: “The emergence of a large scale, centralized, bureaucratic institution...might itself have been a consequence of the creation of tools which empowered its functioning. Certainly writing enabled the administration to grow, and through written liability, to maintain direct authority over even the lowest levels of personnel and clientele” (qtd. in Goody 91). Rodriguez agrees that “documentary processing is perhaps the most important function of the migration bureaucracy” (*Migrants* 39). But Rodriguez also points out that documents in the bureaucracy only assist in the state’s surveillance of migrants and an affirmation of state authority. Brandt argues that this has been the case historically: “Print in the twentieth century was the sea on which ideas and other cultural goods flowed easily among regions, occupations, and other social classes. But it also was a mechanism by which the great bureaucracies of modern life tightened around us, along with their systems of testing, sorting, controlling and co-ercing” (2). Ethnographic studies such as Ellen Cushman’s research with an inner city community and Cintron and Vieira’s research on undocumented immigrants have illustrated the ways that documents can distance the state from the citizen and write migrants out of the institutional life of the state. But they also point to the ways disenfranchised groups can leverage their linguistic and rhetorical resources to maneuver or challenge state authority.

In the temp agency nation, documents did move translocally as Smith and Schryer have claimed, and did organize action across locales, distributing the presence of the state along with them. To make workers mobile, they have to be packaged into distinct and trackable entities. As Cintron has argued, state legal documents operate on a logic of order and measurement, and



attempt to fix individuals into manageable and measureable entities that can be accounted for. He claimed that documents consisted of an implicit “cultural intention in which the management of people is accomplished through the specification or fixing of the individual” (54) and function as signs of distance that “came into being precisely because of a lack of face-to-face interaction” (55). Indeed, when walking into the POEA documentation processing area, the complexities of people lives seemed to be bound in tidiness of a single folder. And when walking into the labor recruitment office, a large whiteboard listing worker statistics and demographics organized the workers into manageable and trackable pieces to be moved around. But even though documents acted as a technology organizing social life, they did so through the operation of state workers and industry workers who engaged with the messiness of human life. State and industry workers were also tasked with performing through their work the authenticity and authoritative power of the state—this was particularly a struggle among private industries like recruitment agencies who at times worked along side and other times opposed the state’s interests. Thus, although documents can create an infrastructure for bureaucracies and can spread the interests and intentions of these organizations, at the ethnographic level, the textual infrastructures of bureaucracies are not impenetrable. In this chapter, I will point to the ways that migrants attempt to reverse the logics of distance embedded within documents that says the individual is at odds or controllable by the state. Migrants recognize the irony that the state addresses them affectively in other aspects of the labor migration apparatus, but yet try to be without affect in the monitoring of legal papers. Instead, migrants use texts to articulate an intimate relationship to the state and use their affective literacies to question its authority. Despite the distancing and measuring functions of literacy as technology at specific sites of the textual infrastructure, we can see that those who keep up and engage texts do so with much intimate interaction. I turn now to the

narratives of Cristina and Melanie, two workers in the textual infrastructure of the bureaucracy that manages Filipino labor migration.

*Melanie: “You Cannot Please Everyone”*

The Pre-Employment Services office is in what I can only describe as a big pen—a big open space with desks arranged randomly and signs hanging from the ceiling indicating where a new department starts. There were not even cubicles to give private space for people to work independently because this would halt the flow of people and documents. The “pen” was messy and chaotic. On the wall surrounding one side of the pen was a row of “cashier” windows where the liaison officers, working for the recruitment agencies, paid the documentation billing fees. I sat with Melanie, a POEA employee who worked primarily with approving migrant employment contracts and visas, during the chaotic three o’clock that marked the deadline for processing that day. When I asked Melanie what her job entailed, she explained that she receives a folder containing a group of documents for each worker who is attempting to migrate. These folders have come from the recruitment agencies—in Melanie’s department, they did not work with migrants directly. She analyzed this folder to make sure that all the necessary documents were included and that all the information on the forms matched and appeared legitimate. The folder would include the employment contract, visa, and evidence of trainings, medical exam, and PDOS completed. Melanie explained that one common indicator that something was wrong in a migrants’ folder was when the visa sponsor on the original application didn’t match the sponsor on the contract. This often indicated a fake contract, meaning that there was not an actual job overseas or this job for which the worker was leaving did not exist. Melanie explained it was common for labor recruiters to make up fake employment contracts, for a fee, in order to allow migrants to leave the country. Another example is that the fake employment contract would

report the job overseas as “accountant” when the employee really had a job as a domestic worker for an uncertified employer. When labor recruiters did this, Melanie called it *palusot*—meaning to evade or find a loophole.

She also looked for fraudulent visas and said that she knew something was wrong when the font was off, for example if the font was bigger than it was supposed to be, or if there was a wrong letter or stamp in the wrong place. This seemed a particularly exceptional task considering the visas for Saudi Arabia, which she most often worked with, were almost completely in Arabic. She said that even though she was never trained in Arabic and didn’t know all the characters, she learned how to identify fraudulent documents by talking together with her team of evaluators and comparing visas they suspect to be fraudulent:

“First, we really talk, the evaluators, we really talk. And we compare, notes, all of us. Seven of us. I discovered that—look at this—this is different. We really talk, we compare, and we make sure that if they encounter the same, to really watch for that [recruitment] agency, that if this visa looks like its tampered [...] they have to be very careful the next time the agency submits.”

In addition to the need to stop flow and engage in collaboration over potentially fraudulent documents, other physical realities made it difficult for the POEA to operate like a well-oiled machine. Melanie’s office in the POEA typically tries to process 40,000 applications a month, but on a report that she showed me, they only processed 30,000 on a certain month. This month had an asterisk by it on the report explaining that there was a flood from a typhoon that closed down the offices for three days. Melanie explained that that month, they needed to work weekends in order to address the “backlog.” These reports on documentation processing, as well as other reports indicating efficiency and speed are used when the POEA applies for an ISO

certification, a certification offered to organizations and companies for achieving management system standards<sup>9</sup>. The POEA has been referred to as a model for government institutions of other countries, such as India and Indonesia, looking to make more efficient their labor migration processes (Diamond).

Robyn Rodriguez and Ralph Cintron have written that bureaucracies put on the performance of orderliness and rationality. But speed is not often associated with bureaucracy. This is particularly a neoliberal impulse, and the fraudulent documents as well as the monthly quotas for employment paper processing illustrate the ways that the POEA acts as both a governing and regulating institution but also an economic institution. Often it appears to be an employer, and as I'll discuss later, one of the many consequences of this is that labor migrants come to hold the government to task on this role and expect the kind of efficiency and customer service they would experience in a private entity. These expectations even extend to liaison officers from the agencies whose job it is to literally bring the papers from one office to another. The importance of liaison officers, as well as their constant presence, was brought up often in my interviews with labor recruitment agency employees and POEA employees. Because many of the documents, including visas, passports and certificates, must be made through hard copy, the liaison officers act like messengers bringing the hard copy documentation among the various offices. But liaison officers must also be knowledgeable about the migration process—they should know how quickly a certification can be processed, know how many documents make up a complete application, and know the cut-off times for applications at POEA.

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<sup>9</sup> The POEA first received International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certification in 2008 and reinstated their ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management System certification in December 2012 for thirty-seven enrolled processes. The enrolled processes consisted of documentation of workers, registration of applicants, provision of public information and assistance, verification and certification of OFW records, provision of legal assistance, licensing of recruitment agencies, among other processes. The certification is valid for three years.

The POEA has an eight-hour processing time for employment applications, and the deadline for papers to be processed is three p.m. When I sat with Melanie, the place was swarmed with liaison officers, some of whom had gotten past the security guard at the door to get to the back and talk to managers and people like Melanie who process the documents directly. Melanie said that the most difficult part her job was not the processing of documents, or the report writing, but dealing with the liaison officers.

“They get inside often, they want to talk to you. [The guard] just allows them, they get inside all of them. If you are requiring something they will want to talk to you and explain. [...] You cannot please everyone. You get bullied. The liaison officers are so *mayabang*, [arrogant, self-centered]. And they, believe that they know more better than you, they question you [...] they want it done the way they want it. But *hinde pwede*. [You can’t].”

Melanie’s description of liaison officers here shows that perhaps most importantly, liaison officers must know how to harness affects, attention and desires. Liaison officers act as a representation for both migrants, who are pushing to leave quickly, and labor recruitment agencies, who want to process as many migrants as possible to cash in on the recruitment fees they pay. Liaison officers also act as a kind of embodied infrastructure for the state—because the state works with private industry partners including labor recruitment agencies, health centers, training centers, and banking institutions, the state is spread far and wide across different locales. It is the liaison officer’s role to act as the bridge connecting the state to its industry partners. Because there are over 3000 migrant documents to process per day, liaison officers must know how to harness attention. From my observation, the majority of liaison officers were male and many job ads for liaison officers that I have seen have asked specifically for men. As part of the job, liaison

officers used a masculine aggressiveness to by-pass the many security officers that were guarding the entrance to the document processing room. And, as Melanie said, they “bullied” her and were “mayabang” thinking that they know more than her—the representative of state authority. But what liaison officers seemed to know more about was how to use their affective literacies to push for speed and efficiency.

*Cristina: “Sometimes Our Workers Are Makulit”*

Labor recruitment agencies are often attributed as the “makers” of the *bagong bayani* because of their work facilitating the placement and recruitment of OFWs with foreign employers (Guevarra). But they are also one of the most regulated institutions in the labor migration process and the site of many employee complaints. Omar, the labor recruitment owner I interviewed claimed that before he could open his agency, he needed to secure, along with his partners, three million PhP of escrow money for potential legal disputes. Guevarra argues that agencies are “social institutions that define the contours of the Philippines’ transnational labor export arena. [...] Constructed as partners and enemies’ simultaneously, employment agencies ultimately have the same mission as the state—to sustain the country’s culture of labor migration” (89). Guevarra points out that present both a defining line and a liminal space in the labor migration landscape. They are actively involved in shaping where migrants go and what kinds of jobs they can acquire. Recruitment agencies most often work with foreign principals in the receiving country—the recruitment agency on the receiving end—who then work with placing migrant workers with employers. But recruitment agencies are often seen as exploiting migrants, by either collecting too high fees, deploying migrants illegally, working with unapproved foreign employers, or promising migrants a job when there is not one. In government documents, the state would position labor recruiters as the enemy, thus trying to convince migrant workers that it was the

state that had their interests in mind and that if they suffered from obvious employers or a faulty contract, it was the recruitment agency's fault. This was yet another way the state shirked responsibility for migrant welfare.

I interviewed Cristina, a Documentation Officer for a private Labor Recruitment Agency in Central Luzon. She was in her mid-30s and started working for the agency in 2010. Cristina's job as a Documentation Officer included coordinating the collection of all documents for workers abroad. This is one of the major services that labor recruitment agencies provide. In addition to working with foreign employers to find potential employment opportunities, they also make sure that the migrant workers complete all the trainings for certification, medical exams, and pre-departure orientations. Figure 6 illustrates Cristina's role in working with different institutions in the migrant application processes. First, she must coordinate the mandatory medical exam with one of the certified medical clinics. Because Cristina mainly works with migrants going to Brunei, she knows the list of clinics approved by the Brunei Embassy. Once the migrant worker passes the medical exam, Cristina collects the certification for the exam, and includes it in an application with the Brunei embassy for a Visa. After the visa is processed, along with the migrant's passport, Cristina sends the worker to Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar. In addition, if the migrant is going to work as a domestic helper, she must also take a course at TESDA.

All these visits have accompanying certifying documents which Cristina receives and collects in a folder—the folder eventually received by Melanie and workers like her at POEA. In our interview Cristina went through a sample folder with me, talking me through the different institutions and certifications. She stopped at the Employment Contract and pointed out that it is Authenticated and Verified by the Philippine Embassy. She repeats this phrase “authenticated

and verified” several times so that I know that this is an official document, and points out that it includes an indication of payment: “you have to pay. You can’t process it free at the embassy.”

However, as a labor recruiter, Cristina understood the ways that these papers, and this whole process was more a *performance* of authenticity and verification. Later in the interview, she explained to me her history at the agency, and she—perhaps by mistake—let it slip out that the owner of the agency actually owns two agencies—an illegal practice according to POEA regulations. The agency was suspended because of a complaint from a migrant worker and was shut down temporarily by POEA. And all the employees at the agency had to sign a resignation letter indicating they were no longer working for the company. These resignation letters were meant to be proof that the agency was no longer conducting operations during its suspension, providing a paper trail verifying the halt of activity. However, the owner decided that she wasn’t going to close the agency—just open another agency with a different name, but the same employees. Therefore the letter that Cristina and her co-workers signed was just for the performance of verification and credibility.

Cristina explained the process to move papers from institution, from the point of employment contract to deployment lasted about two to three weeks. This seemed to me exceptionally fast, until I learned that the POEA fines any agency that takes more than sixty days to process a contract. The one question mark, though, the thing that took an inestimable amount of time was the medical exam. As Cristina explains, it is usually the medical exam that holds up the process for another two to three weeks, especially if the worker had something wrong in the exam, some of the most common illnesses being anemia and high blood pressure. A failed exam meant that the visa application would be canceled at the process started all over again. Here the reality of the human body and the complications involved in the embodiment of capital come



into view. The health and the physicality was the barrier in an otherwise completely efficient and speedy process. And an imperfect unable body was not able to move.

The reality of the migrant worker as more than a compilation of papers came up time and time again in my interviews with Cristina. Just as Melanie talked about the liaison officers harassing her, Cristina called her applicants *makulit*—meaning pesky or annoying. She said. “Sometimes our workers are *makulit*. They keep on asking, ‘how's my medical, when are going to send me to PDOS, when are you going to send me to TESDA?’ My goodness. Can you wait please?” Rather than wait for the bureaucratic process to take its course, the applicants would often call Cristina and ask her for updates on the status. Sometimes even the family members of the applicants would call, or the employers overseas would call her asking about the status of the migrant worker. Cristina showed that her job was not to function like a well-oiled machine in the handling of papers—in fact she said that understanding the rules and regulations of the documentation process was easy for her. It was much harder to deal with the workers themselves, or as Cristina put it, deal with “the attitude of the applicants.” She talked in particular about the applicants she worked with that had been abroad before:

“Sometimes, especially skilled workers, once they paid already and then keep on, asking the status of their application and then, of course, we cannot proceed at the POEA for OEC [Overseas Employment Contract] application. Once the job order is not yet accredited by POEA. So of course we have to wait for the accreditation. And then, they keep on calling, texting. What's the status? Why it takes so long? I'm an ex-abroad. [laughs]. ‘If I process it myself, it takes one day only.’ My goodness. [laughing] You don't understand the processing.

[Referring to a telephone call she took during the interview, just a minute before]

Like this one, very stressful, they want to rush. So, what can I do the medical certificate is not here. It's not yet here with me. It's still in the clinic. And then once you get it from the clinic, then the clinic will transmit it by tomorrow at the BDAAC [Brunei Darussalam Association of Accredited Clinics], and then, oh once the medical clinic transferred it to BDAAC, then BDAAC will transmit it at the embassy. See?"

Cristina felt that migrants who bothered her about the application status did not understand the lengthy and intricate processes of verification and certification. Just like the liaison officers, Cristina was annoyed that they felt like they knew more than her about the process. But again, the migrants workers show that they quite knowledgeable about affect. They direct affects to their needs, prompting workers like Cristina to pay attention. This pesky annoyance and persistence is the kind of impatience that is the exact opposite of the calm and pleasant demeanor asked for by the state. For example, it is the exact opposite of *matiyaga*, (patience) which was the attitude the state expected domestic workers to have.

There were several of these instances in the documentation process, whether it was the applicant wanting to step in or the employers calling her, where migrants weren't satisfied with the bureaucracy and with the process. Rather than appear as rational and orderly, they sought be irrational, emotional, and to show the processes for all its particulars and messiness. Cintron explains that nation-state documents

"are objectifications that reduce to manageable proportions the excess of what it means to be an individual, and this process is similar to a map or a text managing the excesses of reality [...] The unidimensionality of a law or regulation cannot help but straitjacket the multidimensionality of human need and, even more so, the almost chaotic abundance of human desire" (56).

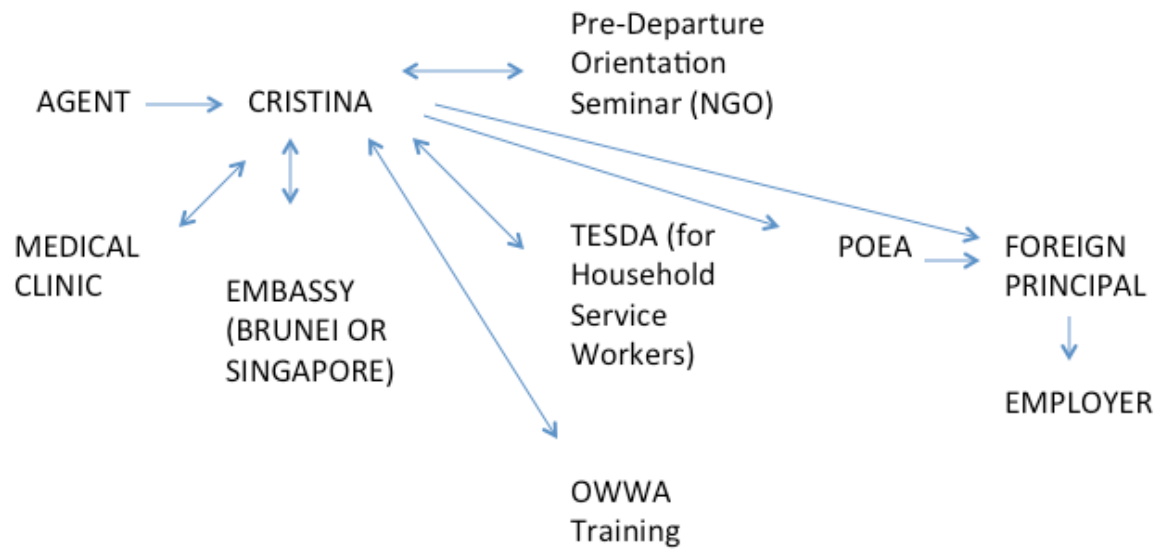
This “chaotic abundance of human desire” that appeared in the documentation process stood out in stark contrast from the proposed rationality and efficiency of the bureaucratic process. Human desires were not something the state could control.

At the end of my interview with Cristina, she still sensed my confusion with the abundance of papers, institutions, and processes that made up her job, so she offered to give me a list of the procedures in facilitating a migrant paperwork for work abroad—a list that she no longer needed for herself, since she long ago memorized the procedures, but for an incompetent co-worker who she said kept asking her questions about what to do. (See Figure 7). As she went over the procedure list with me, she crossed out things that are no longer applicable. In one example, she crosses out the contact information for a TESDA assessment location. They no longer send their applicants to that location, she explains, because the agency kept failing their applicants. But in the new location that they use, almost all their applicants pass. She said:

This [location] here, they kept on failing our—they always fail our workers, our applicants. Unlike here [in this other TESDA location], they are very considerate, almost all our workers, they pass the assessment. [But there] it was very strict [there.]

Thanks to the “consideration” of the new TESDA training location, migrants were able to be processed faster, prompting the question of what the training was really measuring in the first place. As Cristina crosses out and updates the list, explaining the hidden politics of which testing location to go to and which was the fastest processor of the medical exam, she illustrated a bureaucracy that is not a well-oiled machine, but dynamic and shifting. On the back of the procedure list were photocopies of an employment contract and a Brunei visa with notes in the margin. The paper is layered with history, as well as a paper that showed a disregard for the sanctity of legal documents. The cross outs, the old photocopies—they archive both movement

and friction. Unlike the migrant state documents that present the state as neutral, fixed, and authentic, Christina's list is a document that creates an archive of particularities where "rubber meets the road" (Tsing). Her list shows that texts may make up the infrastructure of the state, but that infrastructure is malleable and editable. Cristina and Melanie work not in a well-oiled machine, but at point of friction between people and texts, between particularities and standardization, and between the dynamics of individuals and constrained representation. No matter how much the Philippine state tries to regulate both affects and learning practices, migrants displayed their inability to accept the idea that state documents represent their identities and citizens. In their questioning of the paper process, they question the state and the state's authority. In appearing in the documentation process—whether via the bodies of liaison officers or annoying calls in the middle of the day—migrants create intimacy with the state. They demand that the state, which profits from their migration, pay attention.

*Chapter Five Figures*

**Figure 6:** Map illustrating how Cristina moves documents between different organizations and institutions

Figure 7

**DOMESTIC HELPERS PROCESSING PROCEDURE**

✱ Requirements: Passport, 4pcs 2x2 & Whole body (Casual attire), Resume/Biodata

**Sending for Medical**

- ~~Get a Medical referral~~
- Give proper instruction how to get his/her clinic
  - ⬇ Phase 1 – the result will be after 3 to 4 days (you need to call the clinic to follow up, the clinic will tell when will be the workers Phase 2).
  - ⬇ For Phase 2 – this is done only for one day (the clinic will tell when they will release the medical result, the applicant should be the one to pick up the result).
  - ⬇ After the releasing of the medical result, the worker should give it to the agency for the visa filing.

✱ **Visa Filing**

Requirements: Original Passport, 1pc 2x2 picture, Passport Copy (Front & Back), Certified True Copy of Medical, Visa Application & Visa Request Letter.

- ⬇ Original Passport
- ⬇ 1pc 2x2 picture
- ⬇ Passport Copy (Front and Back)
- ⬇ Certified True Copy of Medical
- ⬇ Visa Application
- ⬇ Visa Request letter

**Sending Workers for Owwa, Tesda and Pdos**

**For Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS)**

OCW's  
 Rod [REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED] Quezon City  
 Tel No.: 5736364

Requirements:

- ⬇ Passport Copy
- ⬇ ~~Contract Copy~~
- ⬇ Pdos Referral ~~NAME~~
- ⬇ Payment Php 130.00

Schedules: Monday to Friday starts at 8am (Registration)

**For OWWA Training**

OWWA  
 Owwa Bldg., Victoria cor.  
 Solana St., Intramuros Manila  
 Tel No.: 526-2615 or 527-3656

Figure 7 (continued)

Requirements:

- ✚ Contract Copy (orig.)
- ✚ Passport Copy (orig.)
- ✚ 1pc 1x1 picture

Schedules: Liaison Officer will be the one to get the schedule.

**For TESDA Assessment**

██████████  
 ██████████ d.,  
 San Roque, Marikina  
 ██████████

Requirements:

- ✚ 2 Contract Copies
- ✚ 2 Passport Copies
- ✚ 4pcs 2x2 picture (white background w/ collar)
- ✚ Payment 400 assessment fee + 150 for the things needed

Schedules: Wednesday & Friday (The worker should be in the center at 8am i  
 the accessor will tell when will be the releasing of the workers Tesda Certificat

**FOR POEA PROCESSING** - DEU

Requirements:

- ✚ Original Passport with visa stamping
- ✚ Original Contract (signed by the helper)
- ✚ Original TESDA, OWWA, PDOS Certificates
- ✚ Fill up Philhealth Form (M1B), OFW Information Sheet Form, E-Card
- ✚ 2 Passport Copy attached to E-card Form and Philhealth Form
- ✚ Request for Processing (RFP) – E-Sub
- ✚ Philhealth Summary
- ✚ Exit Monitoring Slip

Figure 7: Cristina's document processing procedure list

## Conclusion

### Virtual Nationhood

My parents migrated to the US from the Philippines in the 1980s. When I started this project I saw it as a way for me to explore the kind of global trajectories that brought my parents to the US. I thought it would be a way to “help” my parents even—to tell their story to the world, to make visible the parts of their lives that were so invisible, or to recover what Victor Villanueva has written as “that which had been lost on the road to assimilation” (9). But over time it became clear that rather than helping my parents “heal” from the losses of assimilation, what my research was really doing was causing them more stress. Throughout graduate school, they would worry about my health or finances and wonder when I was ever going to graduate. When I told them I wanted to go to the Philippines to conduct part of my research, they were anxious: I barely knew the language, I didn’t know many people there, there was no way I could navigate it on my own. My literacy affected them in ways I couldn’t have predicted.

Throughout my time doing fieldwork, my literacy—including my interviews, inquiries, field notes, observations, annoyances, hunches, preoccupations and wanderings—produced many different affective responses. During and after interviews, informants responded with a mix of relief, exhaustion, pride, or stressful claims of having a “nosebleed” from talking in English too long. In one school, they had labeled the day that I would arrive to the site as the “ambush interview” day on the office calendar. But not all responses were so severe. At the same school an administrator told me that several teachers were surprised at how much they enjoyed the interviews, whether because they felt knowledgeable, enjoyed the conversation, or took pleasure in speaking English. At the labor recruitment agency, my presence resulted in a large tray of food being brought out to welcome me. As I moved throughout the “the field,” I learned that I was not



the individual researcher I thought I was. My work, my literacy, and my body moving throughout the space had affective resonances—people were affected by me as I moved and I was affected by them. Perhaps the lesson affective literacies teach us most is that we don't do literacy alone. Literacy generates affective responses. In the language of affect, our bodies press upon other bodies asking for a response.

We might understand these affective responses as part of *literacy's externalities*. In their edited collection bringing together economics scholarship and anthropological research on literacy, Basu, Maddox, and Robinson-Pant explain that externalities are a potential point of convergence for economists and anthropologists, since they highlight that “one person's literacy can have an impact on another's welfare [...] The measurement of the effects of literacy may be a preserve of economics, but the routes of externality clearly belongs to the anthropologist” (5). In other words, highlighting externalities in literacies research reinvigorates the question “what are the effects of literacy?” by bringing to the forefront the non-transactional means through which literacy and its effects travel via relationships of kinship, nation, and community. Highlighting externalities prompts us to think about literacy as more than the individual literacy user and the individual's literacy experience and more toward collective experience of literacy. However, it seems that focusing on the routes of externality becomes difficult if these externalities are in fact affective, as affect exists in the space “between presence and absence, between object and object/subject and between the definite and indefinite” (Anderson 77). Where a route ends or begins and where it leads becomes difficult to trace. Affect seems to point to something humbler yet at the same time more expansive than routes.

Rather than routes, I posit these effects of literacy and their affective resonances as *literacy remains*—what's left when we as literacy users impress upon the world. These effects

may not be obvious—what is outside or external from literacy may not be so separate from literacy itself. As Mazzarella suggests affect is “neither wholly external to [mediations] nor simply a discursive affect of them” (299). I believe that “literacy remains” as a concept, as well as felt in the lived experiences of my informants, suggest that literacy’s dimensions have more depth and complexity than we can see by examining them as texts or linguistic resources alone. We may only find out about its effects until after the damage has been done or the impact has rippled outward into something past our recognition. How does affect shape what it means to do literacy work? How do we apprehend what effect our literacies have on others? This inquiry opens up many possibilities for rethinking what fits within the boundaries of literacy and literacy studies. As literacy researchers engage with the demands of global competition—whether it be through the presence of international, immigrant or refugee students in our classrooms or the educational imperatives for the transfer of learning—affective literacies opens the space to interrogate these pressures “to move.”

For example, the integration of affect, literacy, and global economics push us to engage with the high-skill, low-skill divide that defines migration trajectories and economic flows. The reversal of high-low categories that I am suggesting not only opens up our understanding of what literacy practice looks like, but can also influence how labor is valued in migration policy. As the flow of people globally becomes increasingly understood along a vector of skills, controlling who can move and where and when, destabilizing skilled-unskilled labor categories has a stake in how we understand the transnational flow of labor at large. As Parvati Raghuram explains “skills have become one of the most significant vectors in contemporary migratory regimes” where certain countries have opened up their borders for the highly skilled while limiting immigration opportunities for the less skilled (81). Importantly, Raghuram claims that “skills

provide migration policies with a thin veneer of gender, class, and race neutrality.” Therefore, she encourages scholars to strip away this veneer through critically examining the “modes of governance” that have produced skills (93). One way to do this, Raghuram argues, is to fully examine the ways that skills production is mapped onto and folded into trajectories of skilled migration—that is to examine how skills are valued and produced in both the sending and receiving countries.

While affective literacies are a part of everyday migrant life, there is a need for policy that acknowledges and values the emotional and embodied dimensions of human capital. As Deborah Brandt has written about the knowledge economy, “Government analysts continue to ponder the costs and benefits of human assets, including literacy, in the knowledge economy. However the costs and benefits to humans has been much less explored” (“Writing” 194). An attention to affective literacies offers what I hope is a step toward a fuller and more complex understanding of the human dimensions of human capital—an understanding that comes from the creative tensions of interdisciplinary inquiry. The language of skills and the language of migrant activism have not often mixed, but what would happen if migrant activist groups articulated a politics of productive engagement with skills? What kind of political work would be possible? Literacy has long been a concern for economists examining development, but what kind of economics would an attention to affective literacies yield? What would the temp agency nation look like?

In the introduction to this dissertation, I opened with Diamond’s article for *Wired* in which he expressed fascination for the new global commuting, cross-border future for the modern worker. He used the term “virtual nationhood” to describe the transnational connections made possible by computers and mobile phones and other such literacies to simulate a nation

across borders, a kind of virtual reality for something that does not exist. But it occurs to me now that we might think of virtual another way—the state of coming close to something, perhaps on the brink of achieving it, an almost coming together. This is the space for Filipino literacy remains, existing at the edge of something resembling possibility and home.

## Appendix A

### Interview Protocol: Filipino/Filipino-American Labor Migrants

#### *Educational Experiences*

1. Describe your experience of being educated in the Philippines.
2. Describe your decision to pursue tertiary education/training for your occupation.

#### *Migration Experiences*

3. Describe your decision to migrate and what the process of migration was like.
4. Describe your expectations for your work and personal life in the U.S.

#### *Work Experiences*

5. Describe your current occupation and employer.
6. Describe in detail the daily tasks of your job.
7. Describe the skills/abilities you feel to be the most important in your job.
8. How does your education in the Philippines relate to your current job?

#### *National Identity*

9. Describe your knowledge of brain drain, or the migration of skilled labor, from the Philippines.
10. Describe how living and working abroad affects your identification as a Filipino, Filipino-American or American.

## Appendix B

### Interview Protocol: Educators and Administrators in the Philippines

#### *Background*

1. Describe your current job at your institution.
2. Describe your educational and work experiences before attaining this position.
3. Describe the characteristics of your institution and the student body.

#### *Potential for Migration*

4. Describe the ways the potential for migration affects students and curriculum at your institution.
5. Describe what skills/abilities you think students must have in order to work abroad.
6. Describe the ways in which your institution prepares students for work abroad.

#### *Commission on Higher Education (CHED)*

7. Describe how your university has responded to national regulations on tertiary occupational training and work abroad.
8. How would you describe the effects of brain drain on your institution, your students, and the educators and administrators at your institution?
9. How would you describe the effects of brain drain on the national education standards?

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